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Christ and Progress

A Discussion of Problems of Our Time

By

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INTRODUCTION

Every day brings a ship,
Every ship brings a word;
Well for those who have no fear,
Looking seaward!

EMERSON

I

THE KING IS DEAD

AS I sat thinking, on New Year's Eve, the years seemed to go marching by with a regal air. The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel lay open before me and I read, *So David slept with his fathers and Solomon reigned in his stead—And Elah slept with his fathers and Zimri his son reigned in his stead—And Ahab slept with his fathers and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.*—" Reigned " and " slept,"—" reigned " and " slept." O, weary iteration! I saw a darkened room in the palace; men and women in courtly apparel watching at a death-bed; tears and whispers; then daybreak and the blast of silver trumpets: " The king is dead; long live the king! "

So the years in royal state went by; some crowned with shining gold; others with garlands of laurel that drooped and faded ere they passed from view; still others with the cypress of memorable griefs. And, watching this imposing cortege I quite forgot the near approach of Death, until the clock began the measured stroke of twelve. Farewell, Old Year!

> Alack, our friend has gone;
> Close up his eyes, tie up his chin,
> Step from the corpse and let him in
> That standeth there alone!

Then into the silence of the night came the far-off chime of bells, followed by the blowing of horns and shrieking of whistles; it was as if already the long-roll were sounding and the Royal Guard mustering to bear the Mighty to his grave. *Sic transit gloria mundi.* The king is dead; long live the king!

And then I heard Prospero commenting on the fanciful ceremonies of the Masque:

> Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
> As I foretold you, were all spirits, and
> Are melted into air, into thin air:
> And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
> The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
> And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
> As dreams are made of, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

It is visions like this that breed a hopeless melancholy, unless they are relieved by the thought of God over all.

He is the King eternal, immortal, invisible. The breath of other kings is in their nostrils; "each goeth to his narrow house;" but this King "sits on no precarious throne nor borrows leave to be." Time is His handmaid. The march of the years is under His command.

Two centuries ago the dignitaries of France were assembled in Notre Dame to celebrate the obsequies of Louis XIV. The Cathedral was draped in black; the light of candles gleaming in the chapels was eclipsed by the lurid glare of uplifted torches; on

every side was the pageantry of woe. The dead king lay in a splendid catafalque, under a canopied pall, before the high altar, with the insignia of royalty about him. He had reigned seventy years; a period of magnificent state, of magnificent tyranny, of magnificent vice. Louis le Grand, they called him. Louis le Magnifique! The Court Chaplain, Massillon, at whose reproofs this king had oftentimes trembled like David before Nathan, rose to deliver his eulogium. For a time emotion overcame him; then slowly his eyes were lifted from the coffin, higher and higher, until the silence was broken by the words: "Only God is great!"

It was like an echo of the words of Moses, when, climbing the lonely slopes of Nebo, he turned to view the shining tents of Israel in the valley below:

> Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place
> In all generations.
> Before the mountains were brought forth,
> Or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world,
> Even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God!

But whither go the years, thus divinely captained? *They march to conquest.*

Not so was it with the kings of Israel; on they went from bad to worse; from reckless Jeroboam "the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin," to impotent Zedekiah who, with eyes plucked out and hands in manacles, was led away to hopeless bondage in Babylon. But the years ride in chariots and move onward, with strange recessions like the flowing tides (whereat short-sighted men take fright, crying "All's lost!"), from better to better, to the Golden Age.

There is no gospel in pessimism, and there is no pessimism in the Gospel. God reigns and Faith walks hand in hand with Hope. The Pessimist builds his house on The Flats, and when a freshet comes and sweeps it away, he thinks there is another Deluge; but the world moves on.

God launched a mighty enterprise when He made this world and peopled it. He meant that there should be kings and potentates, but that He Himself would be King over all, forever and ever. All the events of history were, from the beginning, included in His comprehensive plan; the Fall, the Flood, The Confusion of Tongues, the Conquest of Palestine, the Captivity, the long Egyptian night, the Advent, the Tragedy on Golgotha, the Pentecostal Effusion, the Marching Forth of the Eleven to Conquest, Persecution on Persecution, the Dark Ages, the Reformation, Revivals, Declensions, Missionary Conquests; He foresaw them all.

And He foresaw the coming of men to meet events. He called Abraham from the foundation of the world; and, in the fulness of time, from Ur of the Chaldees, came the answer, "Here am I." He called Moses who answered from the desert of Midian, "Here am I." Paul; and from the Damascus highway he answered, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" Peter the Hermit, Wycklif with his open Bible, Luther, Wesley, Whitefield, Moody: and these kings of progress, greater than Pharaohs and Cæsars, Plantagenets and Tudors, answered to their names, met their destiny and moved on. The minstrels, lifting the birth-song, have ever overtaken the mourners on their way to God's Acre. Is the king dead? Then, long live the king! And He

that sits in heaven looks calmly on awaiting the restitution of all things.

He foresaw the end from the beginning. He calmly viewed, from the remote ages of eternity the consummation, the portent which blanched the face of Nebuchadnezzar. Call in the prophet and let him interpret the Great Image; head of gold, breast of silver, loins of brass, legs of iron, feet of clay. See the Stone, cut out of the mountain without hands, smiting it; and behold how the winds of heaven are scattering its dust as chaff from the threshing-floor. So "the giant forms of empire on their way to ruin, one by one, they tower and are gone." But the last kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom; and the dominion of the Last King shall be forever and ever: as it is written, "The tabernacle of God shall be among men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be their God."

What then?

It behooves us to keep step with progress.

Let us march with the procession of the years. This means to follow Christ. No man is a progressive thinker who thinks at odds with Christ. No man is abreast of the logic of events who does not lend himself to the great purposes of Christ, the Christ who leads the van.

A little company of prisoners was brought forth one night in the year 64 from the dungeons of Rome to grace the Saturnalia. They were a laughing stock to the populace; rabbis thrust out their lips at them; Seneca, the philosopher, looked on them as ignorant victims of a strange delusion; it was enough that they believed in a divine Book and worshiped a crucified

God. Yet these were the only men in Rome who were really ahead of their time. On that memorable night, smeared with pitch and encased in iron baskets, they lighted the revels in the gardens of Nero's Golden House. Nero went the way of all flesh, the rabbis were forgotten, Seneca was resolved into a name; but the light of those living torches has been thrown along the pathway of the centuries until this day.

The way of progress is the royal way of the cross. All other progress is false and illusory.

We are bound to be abreast of our time; but, how?

On the one hand we must bury our dead as we pass on. Must, I say; yet this is the most difficult thing in the world to do. The darkest hour in the life of Abraham was when he came to Kirjath-Arba "mourning for Sarah and weeping for her." And he spake unto the sons of Heth saying, "I am a stranger and sojourner with you; sell me a possession that I may bury my dead Sarai, my princess, out of my sight." And there in the cave Machpelah he buried his dead; and having rolled a stone before the sepulchre he passed on. So must every man. Old joys, sorrows, long-cherished sins, dreams that never came true nor could come true, thwarted ambitions, grudges and enmities, customs that were better in the breach than in the observance, false dogmas, prejudices, all things superannuated, all things disproved by experience; bury them! Bury them all! Life at its best is a forced march, in which the *impedimenta* must be left behind. The progressive man goes unencumbered along with the procession of the years.

But while we are burying the dead let us take heed that we bury none of the living with them.

The things that survive have right to double life. Cherish the hopes that would not down; persist in the prayers that, unanswered as yet, are buttressed by great promises; cling to the truths that, however derided, are fixed in heart and conscience and in the oracles of God; maintain the habit of monotonous but vital duty; give up no right purpose, no holy aspiration, no heavenly ambition.

Aye, bury your dead; but let no man bury your living! Lay deeper emphasis on the truths that have passed through furnace-fires without the smell of smoke upon them, and the moral precepts that have been tested in the experience of nations and men: and formulate them into life and character as you pass on. This is the martial music to which the years advance toward the Golden Age:

Ring out the old, ring in the new;
  Ring out the false, ring in the true!

Ring out a slowly dying cause,
  And ancient forms of party strife;
  Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out false pride in place and blood,
  The civic slander and the spite;
  Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.

Ring out old shapes of foul disease,
  Ring out the narrowing lust of gold;
  Ring out the thousand wars of old,
Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free,
  The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
  Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be!

THE RELIGION OF THE FATHERS

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said, "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal these words appear,
'My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

SHELLEY

II

A MUMMY ON ITS TRAVELS

IT is little wonder that children love to hear the story of Joseph; it reads so like a fairy tale. How bravely he put his foot upon the lowest round of difficulty and climbed, step by step, to power! "It is curious to see," says John Foster, "how the space clears around a man of decisive spirit and leaves him room and freedom." A shepherd boy, a captive, overseer in Potiphar's house, a prisoner, keeper of the prison, interpreter of dreams, king's counselor, chamberlain in the palace, commissary of the empire, Zaphnath-paaneah, son-in-law of the royal chaplain, vice-regent; bow the knee before him!

And every step was promotion for merit. His career is a splendid illustration of the homely proverb, "Be a friend to yersel' an' ithers will."

His true greatness, however, was not due to his official position in Egypt but to his relations with Israel and Israel's God. He was never an Egyptian. Though prime-minister for a period of eighty years, he was never for a moment weaned from the faith of his fathers or naturalized in the alien land. He was in Egypt but not of it. Amid the splendours of Pharaoh's palace his memory dwelt with the old scenes of Shechem. The coat of many colours which he wore in his boyhood was more precious than his official robe. Though wedded to Asenath, daughter of the Priest of

On, his sons were nurtured in the ancestral faith. And when at length, by a combination of strange providences, his father and brethren settled in Egypt, his lot was cast among them. Thither he betook himself for relaxation from the cares of state. He bowed at their altars; he was true to their God.

The record of his death is a tribute to his devotion: "And Joseph said unto his brethren, I die: and God will surely visit you and bring you out of this land unto the land which He swore unto our fathers. And he took an oath of the children of Israel, saying, God will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones from hence. So he died, being an hundred and ten years old; and they embalmed him and he was put in a coffin in Egypt."

His last injunction gave evidence of a mighty faith, a faith that entitled him to a place in the roll-call of heroes in the eleventh of Hebrews. For nothing seemed less probable than that the children of Israel would ever depart from Egypt. But his prophetic eye saw the remote fulfillment of the divine promise. He was so far from being an Egyptian that he would not even have his body rest in that alien soil. The boy-dreamer was a dreamer still: "God shall surely visit you!"

Years passed. Two centuries dragged their slow length along. They were centuries crowded with events; the reigns of Pharaohs that knew not Joseph, the gradual lapsing of the Israelites into slavery, the hopeless cry of the brickmakers under the taskmasters' whip of scorpions. Meanwhile a pathetic interest attached to the memory of Joseph. No doubt the mummy-crypt where he lay was often visited by bond-

men, saying, "Were he here, he would vindicate our rights!" Mothers told his story to their children, as they are telling it yet. But would his words prove true? Would God "visit His people?" How long, O Lord, how long?

Then from the desert of Midian came Moses the deliverer, saying, "Let my people go!" The plagues, murrain and pestilence, the death of the firstborn; the captives waiting, sandalled and staff in hand; the midnight cry, the exodus. Out into the wilderness they went; a million fugitive slaves, with the pillar of cloud leading the way.

And they did not forget their solemn oath to Joseph. Though they fled by night in haste, they carried with them the sacred reliquary in which reposed his sleeping dust. It accompanied them through the forty years of their wandering, a constant reminder of God's truth. It was with them at Sinai, at Meribah, at Elim where they rested under the palm trees; it rebuked them when they murmured for the fleshpots of Egypt, it silently chided them when they bowed before the golden calf; it stimulated their courage when they went into battle, a voice from within calling, "Quit you like men!" it was borne before them when they passed dry-shod through Jordan into the Promised Land.

And when at length the land was subjugated and its broad acres distributed among the tribes, they met in solemn assemblage at Shechem for Joseph's sepulture. In a tomb, bought three centuries before by his father, then a sojourner in the land, he was laid to rest with solemn rites. By the ruins of the old altar called *El-Elohe-Israel,* the funeral address was delivered by Joshua, who called upon the people to renew their

covenant with God. And there through the intervening centuries the bones of Joseph have lain in waiting for the trumpet of the Great Day.

To my mind there is something profoundly impressive in the thought of that mummy-chest, carried about by the people through the centuries, and influencing immeasurably their lives and history. It suggests the mighty influence of the past and of the heroic dead upon the passing events of our time.

We are fond of thinking that we live in an age of progress. "Ring out the old; ring in the new!" We are exhorted on every hand to keep abreast of the age. There is a frenzied protest against the creeds and symbols of antiquity. The children are risen up against the fathers as belonging to an effete age. We hasten to the market-place, like the Athenians, to hear or tell a new thing. We follow the neologists as boys follow the engine to a fire, or if too busy to follow we stand gaping after it. We run with the Higher Critics, the Ethical Culturists, the Theosophists, the Evolutionists, the Christian Scientists, anybody, anywhere. The *ignis fatuus* is our pillar of cloud. *Zeit-geist* rather than *Heiliger Geist* is "the spirit of the age."

By all means let us move on; but there is a "pace that kills." The race is not always to the swift. It is a foolish army that throws away its provisions with its *impedimenta* in the interest of progress. Let us pause a while to ponder on the religion of the past. There are certain considerations that press upon us:

First: There is something to be said for the fathers.

They are not dead. The dead are the living and we who think ourselves to be living are only preparing to live. The men who are marking out the policies and

controlling the destinies of our own nation are such as Washington, Jefferson, Hamilton, and Monroe whose "doctrine" is the keystone of our territorial greatness. These went over to the majority long ago. They are "the choir invisible," who live again

> In deeds of daring rectitude, in scorn
> For miserable aims that end with self,
> In thoughts sublime that pierce the night with stars.

The world may forget the names of its past worthies, and neglect the graves wherein they lie; but their influence is "proof against the tooth of time and razure of oblivion."

Second: It does not follow that because a thing is old it is necessarily false.

There are some things which are never superannuated. Air, sunlight and spring water are as old as creation and yet quite worthy of this age. You will search the Patent Office in vain for any improvement upon them. May it not be barely possible that in the infinite province of truth there are some postulates and factors as unchangeable as these? For example, such facts as God Himself, His oracles, His pardoning grace, life and immortality, faith and righteousness, love and justice, the precepts of the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount.

Third: Some things improve with age.

There is a familiar proverb: "Old wood to burn, old books to read, old friends to love;" to which Charles the First added, "If you care for comfort, old shoes to wear." So the influence of the fathers increases with the passing years. The names of Calvin and Wesley are more potent than ever. The prowess

of Robert Bruce at Sterling and Bannockburn is written in song and chronicle; but long after his body had returned to dust, the Scottish army bore his reliquary aloft in battle with the cry, "The Heart of Bruce!" and by the magic of his name redeemed the day.

The saying, "Influence never dies," tells but half the truth. The influence of a noble life is a perpetually waxing factor in human history. It brightens in the glamour of past association. Who does not know the spell of memory? the old home? a mother's face? the songs of long ago?

You sit with a bundle of brown letters before you; their message swims before your eyes; the past takes hold upon you. The postman rings; what matters it? He can bring you no letters like these.

Not long ago I found between the leaves of a Bible a flower plucked from a child's grave. The fields were full of flowers, but none like this;

> Withered, faded, pressed between these pages,
> Crumpled fold on fold;
> Once it lay upon her breast; and ages
> Cannot make it old.

Fourth: It must not be assumed that because a thing is new it is therefore true or supremely important.

Let us keep on singing, "Ring out the old, ring in the new;" but make sure that in so doing we "ring out the false, ring in the true." Let Israel keep jealous guard over her reliquary until Shechem is reached.

We speak of "new forces" but there are none. Steam was steam before Watt utilized it. Lightning was lightning before Franklin harnessed it to com-

mon toil. The best that we can do is to make new adjustments and applications of old forces, nor are the new adjustments always permanent: the inventor is under the necessity of making constant "improvements," that he may renew his patent from time to time.

The same fact is observed in the province of moral and spiritual things. The Bible is as true as ever, though, as John Robinson said, "There be ever new lights breaking from it." The man with a spade digs up a slab or cylinder from the ruins of Nineveh; whereupon the historicity of Scripture is confirmed, but the "new lights" give way to other lights. And "whatever may be the surprises of the future," Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day forever: His influence in human affairs is more potent and manifest with every passing day.

Fifth: The secret of true progress is to keep abreast of events while christening all that was valuable in the past.

Wherefore, as Pope said,

> Be not the first by whom the new is tried;
> Be not the last to lay the old aside.

There can be no true spirit of enterprise without conservatism. The student in geometry who refuses to heed the axioms and postulates will never cross the *pons asinorum*. The man who will not observe the old landmarks can never hold an estate in fee simple. The chauffeur who speeds his automobile at an unwarrantable rate is arrested by a homely moving-van placed crosswise in the highway by officers of the law. Wherefore, do deference to the beacons and barriers

of the past. Take heed how, in your haste to reach the Canaan of truth, you drop the reliquary of Joseph by the way. A dwarf on the shoulders of the giant Past can see further than the tallest of the Anakim. Honour the fathers then, that thy days may be long in the Land of Truth which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Sixth: Inasmuch as a man's life is not limited by his immediate vicinage or bounded by threescore years and ten, it behooves us to live so that our influence may be helpful to those who come after us. In a little while we shall be "the fathers;" will coming generations honour us?

I can remember when the Dakotas were an unbroken stretch of prairies; far as the eyes could reach was neither shrub nor tree. Forty years ago a silent, solitary man took up a claim, and made it his business to journey far and wide, planting acorns and winged seeds of the soft maple; and to-day you may see the fruit of his labours in oak-openings and long lines of maples along the highways. He did not live to rest in their shadow; but his works do follow him. We owe something, likewise, to posterity.

> Lives of great men all remind us
> We can make our lives sublime;
> And departing leave behind us
> Footprints on the sands of time.

It is well to live for to-day, but he who lives best for to-day lives also for eternity. Heredity is a fact that reaches further than we think. No man liveth unto himself. A Christian father sends his religion down through the veins of remote generations; while one who denies God and the Bible, Christ and the value of His

Gospel, denies them not for himself alone but for those who come after him.

Seventh: Whatever we may do and whatever may become of us, God abideth faithful.

And whether we believe His word or not, it is established forever.

Our acceptance or rejection of Christ cannot affect the final result: the time certainly approaches when every knee on earth shall bow before Him. "Come, Philip," said Luther, in the dark days of the Reformation, "Let us sing the Forty-sixth Psalm: *Ein feste burg ist unser Gott!*" The old landmarks may seem to disappear, but the earth is permanently marked out in Domesday book. Pharaohs may arise who know not Joseph, but God remembers His Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

And finally: The Covenant standeth sure.

If the dying words of Joseph: "He will surely visit you, and bring you out of bondage into the land of promise" be rendered into the terminology of the Gospel it will read, "He that believeth in the Son hath everlasting life." This is the covenant of grace; and this is "the faith once for all delivered to the saints." It is the part of wisdom to cherish that faith until we are quite certain that something better and more trustworthy has fallen to our lot. No *if* or *perhaps,* no guess or hypothesis is worthy to supersede a hope which is founded on God's Yea and Amen.

In one of his sermons Dr. Guthrie tells of a bold adventurer who clambered down an ocean cliff in search of the sea-fowl's eggs. The ledge on which he stood suddenly gave way and plunged into the surge beneath. By a desperate leap, he grasped a twig of ivy that

issued from a crevice in the rock. Will you cry to him "Let go!" Nay, let him hold fast until some better hope of life is given him. The Religion of our Fathers has lost none of its saving power. It holds. It has saved a great multitude which no man can number; it can save us.

III

THROWING THINGS OVERBOARD

IF the log of the skipper of the Alexandrian corn-ship, on which Paul was taken to Rome, had been preserved, it would make interesting reading. It would run somewhat on this wise:

"First day. Sailed from Fair Havens in Crete, where we had long been weather-bound, under a fair southerly wind. Two hundred and seventy-six souls aboard, besides a cargo of wheat. Scarcely out on the open sea when Euraquilo, the Levanter, struck us.

"Second day. Storm still raging. Lightened the ship by throwing out freight carried on the upper deck.

"Third day. Still labouring under stress of the tempest. Further lightened the ship by throwing over all spare tackling and movables.

"Fourth day. Seams parted; obliged to undergird and strike sail.

"Fifth to thirteenth. Driven to and fro in the Adriatic. No sun nor stars. Dead reckoning. Crew and passengers in despair. A prisoner named Paul has been of great service in giving good cheer: professes to have seen a vision from God.

"Fourteenth day. Levanter still raging. Took soundings at midnight and found twenty fathoms; again, found fifteen. Mutinous attempt of crew to escape in small boat. Cast out four anchors, and spent remainder of night in throwing over cargo of wheat, in hope of running the vessel on the beach.

"Fifteenth day. Land in sight: we are close under the lee shore. Panic prevented by cheerful counsel of Paul. Loosed the rudder bands and made sail before the wind. Ship grounded and broken asunder by the waves. Crew and passengers all saved. Land proves to be the Island of Malta. We are drenched and shivering on the shore."

The name of this vessel is unknown to us: but her eventful voyage was an epitome of that which the good ship Progress has been making through the ages, bearing up under the stress of adverse winds, and often unloading in the hope of making her desired haven. On the whole, the world is vastly better off for this lightening of the ship. It has meant the sacrifice of old legends and superstitions, of many valueless dogmas and not a few equally valueless rules of conduct, of antiquated ways of thinking and doing things. A long farewell to such flotsam and jetsam! But, incidentally, owing to panic while "beaten about in Adria," some valuable freight has gone with it. No one regrets the "ruin of the bad" or the "wasting of the wrong and ill." No one deplores the passing of "the outworn right, the old abuse, the pious fraud transparent grown," but we are bound to lament the unnecessary loss of aught that would be of permanent value to us.

We reckon among the things thus needlessly abandoned, in measure, the fundamental doctrine of *the Deity of God.*

The phrase is used advisedly. The divine character is an absolute symmetry of all perfect attributes. The ancient symbol of Deity was a circle; an arc of the circle cannot represent God. It is not enough to say

that "God is Love." Here is the mistake of these days. In leaving out the sterner aspect of Deity we have kept but a fractional part of God. We have supplanted the circle with the arc.

A few years ago as Dr. Berry and Dr. Dale, of Manchester, were leaving an ecclesiastical Conference, the former remarked, "Well, my brother, we seem to have been taking great liberties with God in this Conference;" to which the latter replied, "Yes; I wonder if anybody is afraid of Him in these days." It should be obvious to the most superficial thinker that a God who can be loved but not feared, with whom "liberties" can be taken by men whose breath is in their nostrils, who is not viewed with reverent awe as well as humble gratitude, is really no God at all, but a thing to be scorned and renounced as below the perfection of a well-balanced man. In a true conception of God, Mercy and Truth must meet together, and Righteousness and Peace must kiss each other. He is "a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth." All these attributes unite to constitute the great circle of His character.

It is to be feared, also, that we have lost the just emphasis which should be placed on *the Humanity of Christ.*

It is of immense importance, of course, that we should insist upon Christ's divinity; but the greatest danger, as I apprehend, is not at this point. Not that Christ's divinity is universally conceded; on the other hand, it is denied not only by His avowed enemies, but by certain of His own household. Antichrist is the perpetual heresy. Nevertheless, the heart of the

Church beats true; and the great body of those who profess to be the followers of Christ are united in their ascription of divine honours to Him as "very God of very God." But in our jealousy for the vindication of His divinity, there is danger of losing sight of the complementary truth of His humanity; to wit, that He is "very man of very man." We may so gaze upon His transcendent glory, sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, as to lose sight of Him standing in our doorway as at Bethany saying, "Peace be within this house!" It is on the human side of His nature that Christ touches us and enables us, through Him, to touch God.

It is through Him as "the first born among many brethren," flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, that we find divine sympathy in our pains and sorrows, trials and temptations.

So near, so very near to God,
Nearer I cannot be;
For in the person of His Son
I am as near as He.

We come upon Him thus in the throng and press of human life, like the woman with the issue of blood, and, touching Him, we find healing and salvation.

We have thrown over, furthermore, a proper realization of *the sinfulness of sin.*

All things are reduced in our time to a physical basis. Our shibboleth is Evolution; and thought, emotion, moral conceptions must be brought into line with it. The germ theory is exploited as furnishing a clew to the labyrinth of moral problems. Sin is one of the phenomena which must be accounted for in this way. It is a physical malady, due to heredity

and environment, and to be dealt with accordingly. A while ago the bacillus of indolence was announced; and the professors of moral therapeutics have long since made us familiar with the germs of kleptomania, dipsomania and other phases of sin.

The old view is that "sin is any want of conformity unto, or transgression of, the divine law," involving the necessity of a divine interposition to cure it. The other view obviously precludes the necessity of the Cross or of any other interposition save on the part of penologists and clever physicians. Is it not time, in all reason, to cry a halt?

If there is any truth in our religion, sin is a hell-deserving offense against holy law; and, unless there be some supernatural deliverance, it is bound to involve the sinner in spiritual and eternal death; that is to say, alienation from God. The loss, in any measure, of this view of sin is a real and momentous loss, because it leaves God out of the reckoning, impairs the sense of accountability, nullifies the atonement and if followed to its logical conclusion lands the soul in outer darkness for ever.

It would appear, also, that in the unlading of recent years we have parted with the severe, time-honoured and salutary view of the *sanctity of law.*

An essayist at a recent Conference expressed himself on this wise: "It is useless for preachers to thunder, 'Thou shalt' any longer. We have reached the age of moral suasion. The people are not disposed to be temperate, go to church, keep the Sabbath or do any other desirable thing on the ground of obligation. The imperativeness of duty is worn out; but all minds are open to persuasion."

This is vastly important, if true; because it touches the foundations of character. It is more than important; it is portentous. Reason has its place; but woe worth the day when reason usurps the place of conscience, or when inclination supplants obligation. God, indeed, stoops to persuade men, as He says, "Come now, let us reason together;" but there comes an end of persuasion when He says, "Be still and know that I am God!"

The vision of Ezekiel in which he saw the throne of Judgment overarched with a rainbow of mercy, is no truer than that of Habakkuk: "God came from Teman and the holy one from Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. He had horns coming out of His hand: and there was the hiding of His power. Before Him went the pestilence, and burning coals were under His feet. The everlasting mountains were scattered and the perpetual hills did bow!"

It matters not how God may condescend, He ever reserves the right to command. Though He stand at the corner of the street, huckstering His wares, "Ho, every one that thirsteth! Come ye, buy and eat! Buy wine and milk without money and without price!" He has, nevertheless, not abdicated the throne from which, with the voice of many thunderings, He cries, "Thou shalt!" and "Thou shalt not." His hands are stretched out still, but the Day of Judgment has lost none of its terrors. The imperativeness of duty has not changed a jot or tittle in the progress of the ages. When we have weighed *pro* and *contra* the utility of things and the desirableness of doing this or that, conscience illuminated by the Spirit is still the Court of

Last Appeal. Law is the most tremendous fact in the universe. Right is sovereign. Ought is the weightiest syllable in human language; weigh it against will and thought and joy and pain and life and death, and it outweighs them all.

In the course of events we have also managed to rid ourselves of the disagreeable necessity of *discipline in the Church of God.*

And this we have done despite our best judgment as guided by both reason and revelation. For years the policy of the Church has been inclusion. Gather them in! Candidates for membership are, as a rule, subjected to the most superficial examination with respect to doctrine and life. And once in, no matter what their belief or conduct may be, they are in to stay. Applicants for admission to social clubs are blackballed on occasion, and members are expelled when circumstances require it. A soldier is cashiered for conduct unbecoming a soldier and a gentleman. But there is no such purging of the Church.

In apostolic times a man who scandalized the fellowship by incorrigible indulgence in known sin was made "as a heathen man and a publican," to the end that he might be reclaimed and brought again into vital fellowship with Christ. This is the rule of reason and the Scriptures; but it has gone wholly out of fashion.

The result is that not infrequently the world points the finger of scorn and derision at a church member, saying, "A fine Christian, he!" We have thus given occasion to the enemy to blaspheme. In the light of such considerations can we excuse ourselves for this departure from the original method as prescribed for

us? Did Christ mean anything when, at the beginning and again at the close of His ministry, He entered the temple with a scourge in His hand and divine authority flashing from His eyes, and swept out those who defiled it? If there is to be any judgment against wrong living in this world, ought not such judgment to begin at the house of God?

We note still further a conspicuous loss of *home piety* in these days.

The Lord setteth the solitary in families. He intended the home to be "a little space enclosed by grace out of the world's vast wilderness." The life of Robert Burns was a sad failure in many ways; but the world can never repay him for his sweet picture of the home at Alloway, with the altar and the family gathered about it.

> The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,
> They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;
> The sire turns o'er, wi' patriarchal grace,
> The big ha'-Bible, ance his father's pride;
> His bonnet reverently is laid aside,
> His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare:
> Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,
> He wales a portion with judicious care;
> And, "Let us worship God!" he says with solemn air.

But, alas, in many a Christian home such scenes are but a memory. Where is the family altar? What has become of the Ark of the Covenant, so fraught with blessings in the house of Obed-edom? Where is the old-time Sunday with its hours of worship and Christian instruction and sweet fellowship in heavenly things? The Sunday newspaper has intruded on the sacred scene. Prayer is crowded into a parenthesis.

The study of the Scriptures is neglected. Attendance on the sanctuary is a perfunctory affair. Shall we call this a gain, or an inestimable loss?

Do we believe in the Covenant, any more; the Covenant which God made Abraham saying, "I will establish My Covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting Covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee?"

Is it strange that Christian parents who forget that Covenant should be left to bemoan their prodigal sons and daughters? Its truth is likened to the ordinances of heaven. Its inviolability is that of planetary law. God called the stars of heaven to witness that he would be faithful to the household of Abraham. So accurate are the laws of the heavenly bodies that an astronomer can predict to the millionth part of a second when an eclipse will occur at the meridian of Washington a thousand years from now. So true and trustworthy are the laws which regulate the Covenant which God makes with His people for themselves and for their children. But if we forget this Covenant, what assurance have we? God remains true, though all men be false. He would save our children and bring us together as unbroken households in His heavenly house; but to this end He requires faith in the Covenant, and a faithful discharge of the duties which are involved in it.

Once more we observe a disposition, in these days, to ignore or belittle the importance of *loyalty to truth.*

What difference does it make what a man believes about God or the Bible or Christ or immortality, so long as he tells no lies, pays his honest debts and deals fairly with his fellow men?

We have been told that our fathers were afflicted with "credomania;" that is, they were bond-slaves to dogma. Perhaps so; but certain it is that we are not thus afflicted. It is not credomania but credophobia that ails us. We have swung far to the other extreme. We laugh at creeds; forgetting that "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." No man is better than his creed. Truth is the *pou sto* of character, the fulcrum of life. Looseness of faith is bound to develop into looseness of conduct. We cannot be too jealous for the truth.

There are some who wear their creeds as crustaceans do their shells, on the outside; and every now and then they shed them. But a true creed is like the bony system of the vertebrates; it goes through and through, and is identified with the welfare of every nerve and sinew. By this we determine between the lower and higher orders of life, and by this we measure the strength of a man.

In passing, let us recall the fact that the Alexandrian corn-ship was wrecked in spite of her unlading. It would have been better had she not ventured into the storm, as Paul said: "Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives;" but once in the storm, she might better have kept her deck-freight, her movables and her precious cargo of wheat. They might have been preserved, if as ballast only, to prevent the vessel from being stranded and broken to pieces. It may be necessary and often is, in the course of an earnest life, to throw over whatever hampers and hinders us; but let us avoid the needless abandonment of essential things. The Germans have a homely

proverb about the folly of "throwing out the baby with the bathwater." Here is the danger. Wherefore, in the unlading of the ship, let us, if we would bring our precious cargo to the desired haven, preserve the fundamentals of faith and conduct, as they are recorded in the Written and illustrated in the life and teachings of the Incarnate Word of God.

IV

CUTTING DOWN FRUIT TREES

A GREAT deal has been said, off and on, about the barbarism of primitive warfare; but there is reason to believe that human nature, armed and armoured, never had more of the tiger in it than now. One of our great generals, who was in a position to know about the matter, said that "war is hell." If that holds true in these enlightened days—if homes are burned, wells poisoned and children exposed to the fury of the elements in open camps—what should be expected of the people who lived three thousand years ago?

Yet in the book of Deuteronomy we have an elaborate code of rules and regulations designed to modify the horrors of war; a code so just, benign and practical that it may be questioned whether the International Conference at The Hague made any considerable improvement upon it. One of its provisions had to do with the preservation of fruit-trees as follows:

"When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an ax against them: for thou mayest eat of them and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field is man's life) to employ them in the siege: only the trees which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down." (Deut. xx:19-20).

In order to know the full significance of this injunc-

tion, one must remember the part which the orchard plays in Oriental life. The markets may be closed, the fields neglected, the herds and flocks confiscated; but the lives of innocent home-keepers are safe so long as the fig and the olive and the palm withhold not their fruit. So it is a malignant hand that destroys the fruit-trees.

Our purpose is not, however, to expatiate on ancient rules of war; it brings us rather into the field of religious controversy. The world has ever been divided into two hostile camps,—defenders of the truth and enemies of it. The fiercest wars in history have been accessory to this division; as, in the Crusades, what seemed to be the clash of steel under the walls of Jerusalem was indeed the Koran against the Scriptures, or the False Prophet against the Incarnate Word of God.

The destroyer is always abroad in the land. No believer is allowed to rest in undisputed possession of any truth. The poet Whittier's picture of "The Reformer" is full of vivid suggestion:

All grim and soiled and browned with tan
I saw a Strong One, in his wrath,
Smiting the godless shrines of men
Along his path.

The Church beneath her trembling dome
Essayed in vain her ghostly charm,
Wealth shook within his gilded home
In strange alarm.

Fraud from his secret chambers fled
Before the sunlight bursting in,
Sloth drew her pillow o'er her head
To drown the din.

"Spare," Art implored, "yon holy pile,
That grand old time-worn turret spare."
Meek Reverence, kneeling in the aisle,
Cried out, "Forbear!"

Gray-bearded Use, who deaf and blind,
Groped for his old accustomed stone,
Leaned on his staff, and wept to find
His seat o'erthrown.

Young Romance raised his dreamy eyes
O'erhung, with paly locks of gold,
"Why, smite," he asked in sad surprise,
"The fair, the old?"

Yet louder rang the Strong One's stroke,
Yet nearer flashed his ax's gleam;
Shuddering and sick of heart I woke,
As from a dream.

We are naturally zealous for our faith. It were well if this woodman had designs only on "the godless shrines of men;" but unfortunately his ax is oftentimes laid at the root of the life-giving doctrines of our religion. He has invaded the Lord's orchard, despite the ancient rule of humanity in war; and the goodly trees under whose shadow our fathers took delight and whose fruit was sweet to their taste, echo to his fierce blows. In this there is no occasion for alarm. The war against truth is as old as the memory of man. It was long ago that Voltaire said, "I will go through your theological forest and girdle every tree; so that in a quarter of a century not a sapling shall be left to you." Where now is the axman? But the forest remains. "The Lord's trees are full of sap."

I. The truth of all truths, in our religion, is the Being and Fatherhood of God.

This is that magical tree, called by the Norsemen "Ydnafil," whose roots are on earth, whose branches are in heaven and whose life-sustaining fruit is ever falling among the children of men. The most specious assaults of unbelief are directed against this doctrine.

If it be said there are no atheists in these days,—granted. Open and avowed atheism has been discredited by its results; but its philosophy is still current, expressed in subtlest terms. God is not denied but depersonalised. He is defined to be Law, Force, the all-pervading Soul of the Universe, a Something not ourselves that Maketh for Righteousness. To all intents and purposes this is to say, "There is no God." For what care I for a God that hath no eyes to see, no heart to pity and no hands to help? This is the mere ghost of a god.

His Providence is denied.

Shakespeare said, "There's a Divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will." And a wiser than Shakespeare said, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They toil not, neither do they spin: yet your heavenly Father clotheth them. Shall He not much more care for you?" But the undevout philosopher of our time denies *in toto* the interposition of God in the affairs of human life. He is a mere mechanical deity, blind as Buddh and indifferent to our welfare as the Sphinx of the desert.

And this disposes of Prayer, too.

We have heard a great promise, "Ask, and it shall be given unto you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." But prayer, they

tell us, is valuable only for its reflex influence. It does not "move the hand that moves the world;" it moves nothing. It is like the message which a shipwrecked mariner puts into a bottle and commits to the tossing seas; perhaps a child, wading by the shore, may find it; more likely it will never be found at all.

If the suggestions of the destructive philosophy of our time are to prevail, the doctrine of the immanence of God must go.

Farewell, our Father! We have bowed to Thee in six troubles and in seven; supposing Thee to be "an help to the poor and to the needy in his distress;" but there is no answer nor any that regardeth. Was Laban bereaved in the loss of his poor Teraphim? What orphans, then, are we! Did we rest in God's love? But what heart is there in insensate Law! Or how can we plead with Bathybius or the Whirlwind? Farewell, thou gracious One! Nor can we even cry in this lonely solitude, "God pity us!"

II. The ax of the woodman is lifted, also, against the doctrine of Revelation.

This is that Tree of Knowledge, under which we sit contemplating the great verities of the spiritual life. If there be no standard of authority, there can, obviously, be no certainty as to truth. Jason, in search of the Golden Fleece, must be able to direct his going by the North Star, else all is "dead reckoning" and he is at his wit's end.

There are only three conceivable seats of authority in the province of spiritual things:

One is "the infallible Church;" but the Church, divided as it is, speaks with a diverse tongue.

Another is the Bible, our "infallible rule of faith

and practice." There is an antecedent presumption that, if there be a God of love anywhere in the universe, He would not leave His children without some sort of trustworthy revelation of His holy will. The Bible claims to be such a revelation; saying of itself that it was written by "holy men as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

But suppose the Church and the Bible alike be renounced, what remains? Only the third standard of authority, which is Reason, or the inner consciousness of the individual. But observe where this lands us; every man becomes an ultimate law unto himself. Could presumption further go? "I am Sir Oracle, and when I ope my lips let no dog bark!" We have rejected the infallible Church, and the infallible Book, only to affix our faith to an infallible *Ego.*

But, in any event, the Bible must go.

This is the inevitable outcome of the anti-Biblical criticism of our time. Farewell, old Book! The inexorable censor has been sitting like Jehoiakim before the fireplace in his summer house, Bible on knee and penknife in hand, calmly mutilating the only trustworthy franchise of our Christian hopes! O ye biblical experts, who from your pulpits and theological chairs delight to hurl ill-grounded propositions against the impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture, has it not occurred to you that immortal souls are in the range of your reckless fire? Ye have turned the laughter of many a weak believer into tears of hopeless doubt, and taken from those who venture into the bleak wilderness of temptation their only weapon of defense; to wit, "The Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God!"

III. And another point of attack is the Doctrine of our Divine Manhood.

This is our "family tree." Our lineage runs backward through an honourable ancestry, concluding thus: —"who was the son of Seth, who was the son of Adam, who was the son of God." We have thought that man was created in the divine likeness: God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and made him a living soul. But your iconoclast will have none of this; the biblical account of man's origin is a figment of the imagination. "Adam is a myth." Man is evolved from a primordial germ by the calm processes of natural law. His brain is phosphorus. Thought is the result of atomic friction in the gray contents of the skull.

And, of course, there is nothing in the story of the "Fall." The old definition of sin, "any want of conformity unto or transgression of the divine law," is ruled out. Sin is a disease; something to be healed with a potion or a plaster. Its various phases are "manias:" inebriety is dipsomania; dishonesty is kleptomania. The man who sins against society is no longer a criminal to be punished, but an invalid, an unfortunate, to be fed and clothed and coddled at the public cost.

This involves, manifestly, a loss of the personal sense of responsibility. There can be no responsibility where there is only a mechanical yielding to the force of circumstances. If this conclusion seem unwarranted, let another, not known as "a conservative," be permitted to speak. The President of the University of Minnesota, in a recent address before the Chicago Baptist Union, uttered these weighty words:

"It seems to me that in looking at the religious condition of the country we are confronted by four marked changes which have grown into prominence in the last few years. If I am wrong I shall be glad to know it, and if I am right I shall be grateful, as I am sure you all will be, to any biblical scholar who will show us the truth. These changes stated briefly are: First—A decay of belief in the Supernatural. Second—What I may call the disintegration of the Bible. Third — New views respecting Inspiration. Fourth—Loss of the sense of Accountability. These four changes are essentially one. At least they are shoots from a common root,—and that root is doubt as to whether God has ever had any communication with men."

Nor is this all: the doctrine of immortality must go. One of these days this man, evolved from a primordial germ by natural law, must die. What then? Shall the body return to the dust as it was and the soul to God who gave it? Nay, what is this "soul" but a product of the dust? What is there to return to the God who never gave it?

IV. But further still, the Gospel must go, with all that is essentially involved in it. The ax of the woodman is lifted against the Tree of Life, the Tree whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

The Godhood of Jesus is denied. "What matters it," says the "liberal" pastor of an orthodox flock, "whether Jesus was Joseph's son or not, since religion is not dogma but life?" And, "It is absurd," says a liberal professor in an orthodox seminary, "to believe the scriptural account of the supernatural birth of Jesus, in these enlightened days."

What then of the Atonement? The sufferings of Jesus have no vicarious value. His "blood" is no more effective than that of bulls and goats. Sing no more "Alas, and did my Saviour bleed, and did my Sovereign die?" or "There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins." It is insisted that we are saved not by the atoning death of Christ but by the example of His beautiful life.

And, if these enemies of the faith are to be believed, we have no prevailing Intercessor in heaven. We have fondly thought of Him as looking down upon us from His throne of judicial sovereignty, concerned for our welfare, making all things work together for our good, and expecting to stand as our Friend at Court in the Great Day.

Arise, my soul, arise;
Shake off thy guilty fears;
The bleeding sacrifice
In my behalf appears;
Before the throne my Surety stands,
My name is written on His hands.

He ever lives above.
For me to intercede,
His all-redeeming love,
His precious blood to plead;
His blood atoned for all our race,
And sprinkles now the throne of grace.

Five bleeding wounds He bears,
Received on Calvary;
They pour effectual prayers,
They strongly plead for me;
Forgive him, O, forgive, they cry,
Nor let that ransomed sinner die!

But we are advised that there is nothing in this. Jesus of Nazareth was a super-excellent man and nothing more. Farewell, thou Author and Finisher of our faith! If the things which are being said of Thee by Thine enemies and false friends are to be believed, our faith is vain; they that have fallen asleep in Thee are perished, and we are yet in our sins.

But how dark it is! Sun, moon and stars are quenched in hopeless night. We are marooned; left on an Island of Despair, the Ship of Faith vanishing on the distant horizon. "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him!"

But these things shall not be. There is nothing new in the assaults made upon Christianity, save that they are less vociferous outside the gates and more malignant within. History repeats itself. The tempest spends its force. The thing that hath been shall be.

> O backward-looking son of time,
> The new is old, the old is new;
> The cycle of a change sublime
> Still sweeping through.

Whatever becomes of us amid the passing storm, the truth is certain to abide. There are more real Christians to-day, more who believe with an unswerving faith in the Gospel of salvation through Christ, than ever before in the history of the world. A man, amid the tempests of controversy, may make shipwreck of his faith; but Gibraltar stands and the ocean rolls on.

> A charméd life old Goodness hath!
> The tares may perish; but the grain
> Is not for death.

The prophecies of disaster to the Christian faith all go the way of Voltaire's empty boast: the axman dies; the trees live on.

But it behooves us to guard against the danger of personal apostasy. The world is not willing to have us believe in God and the Bible and the Gospel of Life. The destroyers of faith are on every side. Take heed to thyself, therefore, and to the doctrine! Let no man take thy crown! They tell us we confide in dreams and errors. At the worst, so be it! Do they offer us aught better? Will the famishing sailor who smiles in his last sleep, dreaming of feasts and fountains, thank the comrade who wakes him to the sane horrors of starvation? Nay, let us dream on! Let us die dreaming of the cross and the open gates of heaven!

But, blessed be God, this is no dream. Our beliefs are not "cunningly devised fables." Our hopes are not castles in the air. They rest on the surest of foundations, "*Thus saith the Lord!*"

One thing more: Let a man take heed how he wilfully assails the faith of another. My brother, be no woodman with ax in hand, destroying the fruit-trees of your fellow men. Be a builder! Destroy no error, even, unless thou hast a truth wherewith to supplant it. Break no cripple's crutch; it may be but a poor thing, but he has nothing else to lean on. "Tell me not thy doubts," wrote Goethe to a friend; "if thou believest anything, in God's name tell me that; I have doubts enough of my own." Plant trees and flowers as you pass through the world; leave not desolation behind you. Help men on toward the kingdom of God.

THE UNCHANGEABLE CHRIST

Sometimes I catch sweet glimpses of His face,
But that is all.
Sometimes He looks on me and seems to smile,
But that is all.
Sometimes He speaks a passing word of peace,
But that is all.
Sometimes I think I hear His loving voice,
Upon me call.

And is that all He meant when thus He spoke,
"Come unto Me?"
Is there no deeper, more enduring rest
In Him for thee?
Is there no steadier light for thee in Him?
O, come and see!

HORATIUS BONAR

V

AT THE WELLSIDE

OUR Lord was an itinerant; He had no parish but went hither and yon preaching the Gospel. He wore no gown nor surplice nor canonicals of any sort. He had no pulpit: a mound in the valley, the prow of a little boat swinging at the water's edge, the steps of Solomon's Porch, the corner of the street; these were His "thrones of eloquence." He rang no bell to summon His congregation, but went out into the highways and hedges after it. And this was how He chanced to be at Sychar on a certain memorable day. He knew that "a woman who was a sinner" was coming to draw water and He desired to meet her. It was high noon when He reached the place; His disciples at once betook themselves to the city to buy food; and, left alone, wearied with His journey, He "sat thus on the well" (John iv:6).

The word "thus" is full of practical suggestion; it tells the whole story of the relation of Jesus to human life and experience. For, indeed, He who sat upon the curb that day has in no wise changed His attitude, but is the same forever in His purposes of mercy toward all who pass by.

I. Observe, He sat there *as a Man.* His divinity in no measure affected the fact that He was "very man of very man." He had come from heaven, through the gateway of Bethlehem, to deliver a message of stupen-

dous importance to the children of men. For some thousands of years the divine word had been proclaimed by angels, theophanies, and prophets with fire-touched lips; but now "the Word is made flesh and dwells among us." Jesus is called the Word because He is the medium of communication between God and men. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son."

And this Son with His life-giving message was, as Carlyle would say, "the humanest" preacher that ever spake to men. He had emptied Himself of all glory—crown, sceptre and royal purple—that in human guise He might draw near to us. He stooped to conquer. His posture is that of persuasion: "Come now, let us reason together," saith He; "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." This is preaching; a man with a message drawing near to men. And it was thus that He sat on the well.

II. He was, moreover, *a Poor Man.* He had come to church afoot and clad in homespun. He sympathized with all who, like Himself and His little group of followers, had no money in their purse; and to such He brought a gospel which would make them rich toward God.

His interest in the welfare of the neglected multitude was one of the credentials of His Messianic office. "Go tell John," He said to certain messengers who had come from the Prophet of the Wilderness to inquire whether He was really the Messiah or not—"Go tell John that the poor have the Gospel preached unto them."

It is sometimes said that there is no place nor welcome for the poor in our metropolitan churches. If there be a church anywhere that does not give welcome to the man in mean apparel as well as to him that wears the gold ring, it is no real church of Christ, for He came to save all sorts and conditions of men.

I see a little group of peasant folk coming up the middle aisle: a young man with a middle-aged woman leaning on his arm, followed by a company of sunburned men in linsey-woolsey. Are there wealthy pew-holders who look askance at them as intruders? Nay; God forbid! Let every worshiper rise and give them welcome! For this is the Lord of the sanctuary with His mother and the Twelve. Set up your conventional walls of separation wherever else you will, but never in the Church of Jesus Christ! Here is the one place in the world where the rich and the poor should meet together and acknowledge the Lord as the Maker of them all.

If it be true, as alleged in some quarters, that the Church has measurably lost its hold upon the lower classes, it may be traced to a departure from the spirit of social fraternization which prevailed among the primitive followers of Christ. There was a time when "Not many mighty, not many noble were called;" but nowadays the Church is largely recruited from among the rich and influential: and while this may mean an accession of power in some directions, it is certainly not an unmixed good; nay, rather, so far as it may stimulate a caste-spirit it is wholly disastrous to the Kingdom of Christ.

A legend says that once, when Thomas Aquinas was sitting in the Vatican with Pope Innocent IV, while

contributions of gold and silver were being carried into the papal treasury, the Pope said, with much self-satisfaction, "You see, Brother Thomas, the time is past when the Church must needs say, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" To which the Angelic Doctor replied, "Yes, Holy Father, the time is also past when she could say to the paralytic, 'Take up thy bed and walk!'" If we would regain our influence over the unchurched masses we must assume toward them the attitude of Christ Himself, Who never was an aristocrat but always as a Man of the People entered sympathetically into their utmost needs and longings. Let the mind that was in Christ Jesus be also in us.

III. It was, furthermore, *as a Workingman* that He sat upon the well. The hands which were lifted in invitation that day were marked with the callous ridges of toil.

As these words are being written the coal barons of the Wyoming Valley and their employees are confronting one another with fire in their eyes. I seem to see them passing by this Man seated on the curb of the well. On the one hand the capitalists are saying, "We claim the right to combine for mutual advantage." This is the rationale of "trusts." To which the Master, in pursuance of His Gospel, makes answer, "Aye; combine however you will; so long as you do not infringe upon the rights of the community or of other men: but when, by your trusts and syndicates, you drive the small producer to the wall, then, hands off! Live and let live! Do as ye would be done by." On the other hand the employees are saying, "We claim the right to combine in our labour unions." To which He answers, "Well and good, so long as by so

doing you inflict no wrong upon the community, your employers, or your fellow workman. But when you undertake to say that a man may not labour for whom and when and on whatsoever terms he will, call off your mobs! Live and let live! Do as ye would be done by."

And this is the proposition which will ultimately solve the problem. Capital has its rights; labour also has its rights; but neither capital nor labour has the right to inflict an injury upon the social fabric. It is the function of Law to determine the danger line and see that neither party crosses it. The function of the Gospel is to see that both parties are so Christianized as to have no desire to cross it.

But what of arbitration? If it be voluntary, well and good: but voluntary arbitration has not met the case thus far, nor is there a well-grounded hope that it ever will. And if arbitration be compulsory, it is no whit better than lynch law. Meanwhile let the civil authorities attend to their business, and the Gospel will surely do the rest. The Man on the well-curb is destined to be the final arbitrator. Nothing but the Golden Rule can bring in the Golden Age.

IV. Again, this Man at the well was *a Sufferer,* "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." The lines of adversity were across His brow. He was familiar with the whips and scorns of time, the proud man's contumely, and all the ills that human flesh is heir to. He knew hunger and weariness. He could therefore be touched with a feeling of the infirmities of His fellow men.

The key-note of His earthly life was sympathy. I like to think of Him as walking among the couches

of the sick, of whom it is written, "He healed them every one." I recently visited one of our hospitals on dispensary day. A long line of patients was waiting to consult the physicians in attendance—men and women with sunken eyes and pale faces, the lame, the halt, the withered, mothers with wailing children in their arms. There were many obviously hopeless cases among them; but the Physician of Sychar knew no desperate cases: He asked no questions, and never said, "This serves you right." His word was kindness; His touch was power: "He healed them every one." And it is pleasant to read that in doing so, He "touched them." He touched the blind, the palsied, the leprous. This is the touch of nature's God that makes the whole world kin.

We have so organized our charities that we are in constant danger of neglecting this healing touch. We do good by proxy. We farm out our philanthropies. We rarely come into contact with pain and suffering as we ought to. Is the age of sympathy gone by? Let us by all means send our contributions to the associated forms of benevolence, but we cannot afford to miss what Cowper calls "the generous pleasure of a kindly deed." He who does not for himself stretch forth the helping hand, hears not the sweetest music of earth, the suppliant's "I thank you," nor fully knows the heavenly benediction, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

V. Once more, the Preacher of Sychar was *a Sinless Man*. At this point He would seem to part company with us, since He stood solitary and alone, the One sinless in a world of sinners. "For there is no differ-

ence, we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God." Or as Paul says, "All are con-cluded under sin;" that is, imprisoned in the same cell. But here is One who utters the challenge, "Who layeth anything to My charge?" And the centuries echo the words of one who sat in judgment upon Him, "I find no fault in Him at all."

Yet just here He enters more deeply into our fellowship than anywhere else; since He was, though innocent Himself, by imputation, the bearer of the world's sin. He was—let us say it reverently—the sinner of all sinners; for, even as He sat there on the well-curb, His heart was bearing the awful burden which was destined to break it. "He that knew no sin was made sin for us."

In entering upon His work of redemption He exchanged places with us in our relations to the Moral Law; so that, He being wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, we might be healed by His stripes. So perfect was this vicarious transfer that He seemed to lose His very personality in ours. He exchanged self-consciousness with us; so that, passing under the shadow of the olive trees in Gethsemane, He entered into our experience of conviction of sin, drinking there the purple cup as if it were His very own; and so that in His stupendous passion on Cavalry He went forth as our substitute into the outer darkness of exile from God. Wherefore there is a real truth, whether in the sense intended by our fathers or not, in the saying of the historic creed, "He descended into hell" for us.

It is, accordingly, as the great sin-bearer that He sits upon the well. And the sinners of the world pass

by: sinners of high and low degree; some wearing crowns and others groaning under chains; the Samaritan woman with her unlawful husbands; thieves, murderers; all alike beating on their breasts and crying, "What shall we do?" He came to answer that cry. He heard it amid the glories of His heavenly home and "flew to our relief." He came to seek and to save the lost; to give Himself a ransom for many. "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."

He came as the herald of salvation. A teacher? Yes; announcing in clearest terms all the great truths of the spiritual life. A philanthropist? Yes; having compassion on the multitude, and offering Himself as a help to the poor and needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm and a shadow from the heat. But, above all, a Saviour from sin. No man has made the acquaintance of Christ who has not learned by heart the lesson of His atoning death; to wit, that His blood cleanseth from sin.

His great message is that to the woman who came to draw water from Jacob's well: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Water! Water out of the wells of salvation! Water for all the famishing children of men! Water from the well beside the gate at Bethlehem! Water from "Siloa's brook that flows fast by the oracle of God!" Water of life!

It is recorded that when David was under siege at

the Cave of Adullam he longed and said, "O that one would give me to drink of the water of the well beside the gate of Bethlehem!" And three of his mighty men, overhearing the homesick wish, brake through the host of the Philistines and brought him a cooling draught from the old well. So Christ, with love that passeth knowledge and courage invincible, broke through the opposing hosts of hell to bring the living water to famishing men.

The sermon of Sychar is over. The woman has gone to tell her townsmen of the wonderful Man. His disciples have returned with food, saying, "Master, eat." He answers, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of," adding, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish His work." By this time the people of the city are streaming through the gates and coming this way to meet Him. He speaks to His disciples: "Say not ye, There are yet four months and then cometh the harvest? Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest!" The multitudes are coming to hear the message. Thrust in your sickles and reap! Go preach! Give the people the water of life!

All this was long ago. He rose from the well-curb and went His way. In due time He passed through the heavens to reassume "the glory which He had with the Father before the world was." Yet, amid the splendours of heaven He remains the same,—the same yesterday, to-day and forever. As He sat upon the well, so He sits upon His throne: His hands outstretched in overtures of mercy, His heart beating with sympathy for toiling, suffering, sinning men. He lifts His pierced hands: He speaks; and heaven and earth are

full of His voice: "The Spirit and the bride say, Come! And let him that heareth say, Come! And let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

VI

STILL WORKING WONDERS

IT is sometimes an occasion of surprise that the Jews were so clamorous for a sign. "Show us a sign," they were ever saying, "and we will believe." Yet this was not so unreasonable as might appear. They had been looking for a Messiah for some thousands of years and had been deceived again and again. One Christ after another had led them out into the wilderness of futile hope; and now came this Carpenter of Nazareth, a root out of a dry ground, with no form of comeliness that they should desire Him. Was it strange that they demanded His credentials? Appearances were greatly against Him. He was not at all such a Messiah as they had expected to see. In their Roman vassalage they looked for "one like unto Moses," who with a voice of command and supernatural tokens of divine authority should cry, "Let my people go!" Was not their insistence, then, most natural? And, for that matter, is it not common to every age?

We walk at high noon, and the bells
Call to a thousand oracles;
But the sound deafens, and the light
Is stronger than our dazzled sight;
The letters of the sacred Book
Glimmer and swim beneath our look;
Still struggles in the Age's breast
With deepening agony of quest
The old entreaty: "Art thou He,
Or look we for the Christ to be?"

I. The frequency of our Lord's miracles shows that Jesus Himself did not regard the demand of the Jews as wholly unreasonable.

Signs they called for and signs were forthcoming all along the way. We are given to understand that the miracles recorded in the Gospels are but a small proportion of those which were actually wrought during the ministry of Jesus. These miracles were of three kinds:

First: such as demonstrated His power over nature.

He looked at the fig-tree and it withered. He walked upon the sea. He spoke to the stormy billows, and, like naughty children, they sobbed themselves to sleep. In presence of the hungry multitude He called for five loaves; "'Twas spring-time when He blessed the bread and harvest when He brake." At the supper in Cana, when the supply of wine gave out, He bade the attendants fill the waterpots; whereupon "the conscious water, touched by power divine, confessed its Lord and blushed itself to wine." Thus, over and over again, He showed Himself the absolute sovereign of nature.

Second: He had power over disease.

The sick were brought in couches and laid along the way; and "He healed them every one." He never laid His cunning fingers on blind eyes in vain. He never failed to heal the leper with a word, "Be clean!" Wounds, fevers, hemorrhages yielded to His touch. "Where'er He went affliction fled and sickness raised her drooping head." The hem of His garment had healing virtue in it. At His command paralytics stood upon their feet; and demoniacs sat before Him clothed and in their right mind. At the open grave He cried, "Come forth!" and the sheeted dead came groping to the light.

Third: He manifested a singular power over the souls of men.

As He passed through the gate of Capernaum He said to Matthew sitting at the receipt of customs, "Follow Me;" and without hesitation or demur the man rose up and followed Him. As He walked by the lakeshore He addressed the same words to a group of fishermen who were mending their nets and straightway they followed Him as if drawn by invisible cords.

It is common, in some quarters where the supernatural is set at nought, to attribute this extraordinary power of Jesus to some occult influence, such as hypnotism. In any case, all who came in contact with Him seemed to fall under its spell. He overawed the multitude so that they "heard Him gladly," hanging on His lips. He overawed the detachment of temple-police who were sent to seize Him as He taught in Solomon's Porch, so that they returned without their prisoner, saying, "Never man spake like this Man!" He overawed the passover pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem, so that they fell in line with His disciples and, casting their garments in the way and waving palm-branches, cried "Hosanna! hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!" He overawed His most influential enemies so that for three eventful years He walked among them unscathed while denouncing their most cherished customs and traditions. He overawed the mob that came into Gethsemane to seize Him, so that they fell backward as dead men. He overawed the daughters of Jerusalem, so that they followed Him along Via Dolorosa weeping and wailing and beating upon their breasts. He overawed the traitor who sold Him for

thirty pieces of silver, so that He returned to the hall Gazith and cast the blood-stained pieces of silver upon the marble floor crying, "I have betrayed innocent blood!" He overawed the judge who sentenced Him to death, so that placing him at Gabbatha he confessed before the people, "Behold the Man! I find no fault in Him at all." He overawed the officer in charge of His execution, so that looking on His dying victim he was moved to cry, "Verily, this was the Son of God."

All these miracles are distinctly of evidential value. They were intended to show, on the one hand, that Jesus is the Christ; as He Himself said, in answer to the inquiry of John the Baptist: "Go tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached."

And on the other hand, they were intended to show that Jesus, as the Messiah, is able to save from sin. This was indeed their superlative value. It was a matter of small moment that a few blind men should be made to see, a few lepers cleansed, a few paralytics restored to vigour, in a world full of blind, leprous and palsied men: but in healing them our Lord showed that He had power to open the eyes of the soul to spiritual verities, to wash away moral uncleanness and restore the normal health and vigour of the immortal man. On one occasion, at Capernaum, He said to a paralytic, "Be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee;" and when certain of His adversaries caviled He answered them, "Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (He saith unto the sick of

the palsy) Arise, take up thy bed and go to thy house." And he arose and went his way.

II. But the objector says, these miracles were wrought centuries ago, and whatever of evidential power they may have had, under the circumstances, upon the Oriental mind, they have little or no such power in these days. This is not conceded; but, for the sake of the argument, let it pass, while we turn to certain other of the miracles of Jesus, three in particular, which are of permanent value.

First: His Incarnation.

In one of the familiar pictures of the Nativity a group of peasants are represented as standing on tiptoe, gaping in at the doorway of the cave. This is indeed the attitude of all ages and generations in view of that great "mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." The world stands on tiptoe, wondering. What is to be seen? Only a sleeping child, one hand resting on its mother's breast. What is weaker than a baby's hand? Yet this hand of the Christ-child, apparently so powerless, is destined to shake the pillars of earth's thrones and dynasties, to control the fortunes of empire as Samson unhinged and bore away the gates of Gaza, to turn aside the currents of universal history!

Who is this? Who is this that for nineteen centuries has stood at the centre of every controversy concerning the welfare of nations and the children of men? The mighties come and go; He only is the abiding One. What think ye of this Jesus? Is He God only? Nay, touch Him and see. Is He man only? Then account for these tokens of the supernatural. *Ecce Homo!* He stands at Gabbatha perpetually asking, "Who say ye that I am?"

Second: The Atonement.

The death of Jesus was no less wonderful than His birth. His was the singular death; not only in view of the extraordinary circumstances which accompanied it, such as the quaking of the earth and darkening of the skies, but particularly by reason of the stupendous influences which have proceeded from it. A sinless man dies as a malefactor; the heart of the only Innocent One is breaking under the burden of the world's sin. For some reason, while other tragedies are forgotten, this never ceases to sway the minds of men. Not long ago the Queen of Belgium died; her last words being, "My people no longer remember me; it is time to go." Thus the mightiest pass into oblivion. But the death of Jesus is commemorated by hundreds of millions of people who sit around a humble feast of bread and wine, saying among themselves, "He died for me!" If this vicarious or substitutionary thought, which is the only miraculous factor in the Atonement, be eliminated, how shall we account for it? And what did the infidel Rousseau mean when he said, "If Socrates died like a philosopher, Jesus died like a god?"

The symbol of this wonderful death is the cross. It gleams on the spires of innumerable churches, hangs as an amulet on the bosom of believers, is worn on the arms of crusaders as they go forth to conquest, and is carved on the gravestones of the sainted dead. Is the world still clamouring for a sign? The legend, *In this sign conquer,* which Constantine professed to have seen among the stars beneath the symbol of the cross, on the morning of the battle of Saxa Rubra, has been written across the skies of history unto this day. This is the conquering sign which is destined to bring the world back to God.

Third: The Resurrection of Christ.

Now abide these three miracles: the Incarnation, the Atonement and the Resurrection, but the greatest of these is the Resurrection because it sets the seal upon all. It is the crowning of Messiah. He Himself adventured the integrity of His Messianic claims and the success of His redemptive work upon His resurrection from the dead. "I will show you no sign," He said to His clamouring critics, "but the sign of the prophet Jonas;" three days in the belly of hell, and then life and immortality. Roll the stone against the grave; affix the inviolable seal of Rome; set the armed guard to watch it. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh! He breaks the bands of death and takes captivity captive. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

We speak of this Resurrection as a demonstrated fact. If there are those who question it, let them recall the unchallenged statement of Paul that there were some hundreds of witnesses living in his time who had looked upon the risen Christ. And if they are still disposed to doubt, let them consult Blackstone, the acknowledged authority as to Rules of Evidence, who says, "No event in history is more amply substantiated by competent testimony than the Resurrection of Christ." It is granted that to overthrow the validity of this miracle would be to destroy the religion of Christ, as it is written, "If Christ be not risen, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins."

And, by the same token, we insist that if this miracle be not overthrown the religion of Christ is a triumphant fact, so firmly established that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

III. But the objector again says, "These are ancient history. You are still speaking of miracles that belong to the past. Show us something up to date. Very well: let us turn to three cumulative miracles, common to all centuries, occurring under our eyes and increasing in evidential value with every passing day.

First: Regeneration; that is, the rebirth of the soul.

This is the perpetual mystery of common life. Our Lord speaks of it as an "earthly thing" (John iii:12), because it takes place within the observation of every man.

One morning Saul of Tarsus rides through the gateway of Jerusalem breathing out slaughter against the followers of Christ. At evening, some days later, he enters the gate of Damascus, led by the hand, blind, humbled, transformed into a follower of Christ. Explain that on natural grounds, if you can.

In the middle of the eighteenth century Gilbert West and Lord Lyttleton, leaders among the learned infidels of that controversial age, came together to plan an assault upon Christianity. Each promised to prepare an elaborate and exhaustive attack on what he regarded as the most momentous and salient event of the Gospel record. West decided on the Resurrection of Christ; Lord Lyttleton on the Conversion of Saul of Tarsus. A year later they came together to compare notes. The former said, "My essay is finished; but I have arrived at a different conclusion from what I had anticipated. After a comprehensive survey of the evidence in the case, I am forced to believe that Jesus, who was buried in Joseph's garden, did come forth from the sepulchre, and that He thus proved Himself to be the very Son of God." The latter said: "I am bound to admit that

my researches have brought me to a similar conclusion. The evidence shows that Saul of Tarsus met with an extraordinary change in his way down to Damascus, that he saw the living Christ and that this Christ was the very Son of God."

But the case of Saul of Tarsus is in no wise different from that of ten thousand times ten thousand who have passed through the same transformation; for every converted sinner is "a miracle of grace." Here is a man taken out of the gutter and brought into vital contact with the Gospel of Christ; his whole character is changed; he is "a new man in Christ Jesus;" new heart, new conscience, new will. "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The outcast has become a kind father, a reputable citizen, a good neighbour and brother to every man. In all the transformations of Ovid there is nothing to compare with this. How shall we account for it?

Second: The Church.

By all the laws that control the natural struggle for life the Christian Church should have died centuries ago. This was recognized by Napoleon; who, having been challenged by one of his marshals to furnish an instance of a modern miracle, answered, "The Church of God."

It began with a nucleus of eleven humble men, with the Carpenter in the midst. From the very outset it was exposed to the persecution of the powers that be. Unsheathe the sword! Kindle the fagots! "The Lord shall have them in derision." He speaks: "Fear not little flock; it is your Father's pleasure to give you the kingdom." Wait a while and you shall see this little group multiplied an hundred fold. Its ranks are in-

creased by thousands, millions, hundreds of millions! There are fears within, there are fightings without; but on they go with their red cross banner, singing, "All hail the power of Jesus' name!" They cross the plains and scale the mountains, making prisoners of hope. Behold the captives coming in, as doves that fly to their windows! The dromedaries of Midian, the rams of Nebaioth, the ships of Tarshish are coming this way! The Church is immortal, invincible. It lives, flourishes, enlarges its borders. The kings of the earth bring their glory and their honour into it. Thrones totter and fall; dynasties come and go; but the Church, the great miracle, abides. "God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved." How otherwise shall we account for it?

O, where are kings and empires now
Of old that went and came?
But Lord, Thy Church is standing yet,
A thousand years the same.
Unshaken as the eternal hills,
Immovable she stands,
A mountain that shall fill the earth,
A house not made by hands.

Third: Christendom.

Take a map of the world and draw a line around the nations that have been under the influence of the Gospel. You have fenced in light, learning, enterprise, political and ecclesiastical freedom, domestic peace and comfort, art, science, philosophy, humanity, culture, character and hope. All without is barbarism; there are the regions of darkness and the shadow of death. Is this a mere coincidence?

And the circle which you have drawn is an ever expanding circle. Its centre was an insignificant spot in a remote corner of the earth. Thence it threw its lines of influence around the Mediterranean; then Asia came in, and Northern Africa, and Britain and the Islands of the Sea. "Expansion" has ever been the watchword of the kingdom of Christ. Bring in China, bring in India, bring in Korea, the hermit empire of the East. And still the royal standards onward go. The stakes of the tabernacle are being driven further and further out, its cords lengthened, its curtains stretched. And, so far as we may draw conclusions from the analogy of the past, this process will continue until the triumphing Gospel of Jesus shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

What shall we say to these things? "In an age on ages telling, to be living is sublime." Ours is the age of light, the age of evidence, the age of multiplying miracles, the age of high privilege and of corresponding responsibility. Let us remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! Woe unto thee Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." The argument of the ages converges upon us. We stand under the shadow of a great mountain of evidence. How shall we escape if we refuse to believe? He who rejects the Gospel of Jesus in these days must blind himself to the philosophy of history and to the logic of events. He must resist the hearing of his ears and the sight of his eyes.

TWO UNCHANGEABLE BOOKS

All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body nature is, and God the soul;
That, chang'd thro' all, and yet in all the same;
Great in the earth, as in th'ethereal frame;
Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glows in the stars, and blossoms in the trees,
Lives thro' all life, extends thro' all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent;
Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part,
As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart;
As full, as perfect, in vile Man that mourns,
As the rapt Seraph that adores and burns;
To Him no high, no low, no great, no small;
He fills, He bounds, connects, and equals all.

POPE

VII

THE BIBLE DISPOSED OF, WHAT THEN?

WE are not infrequently asked by people who are engaged in undermining the foundations of Scriptural authority, whether we regard our religion as "the religion of a book?" Yes; more than that, it is the religion of two books, Nature and Revelation. In the recent controversy between Professor Delitsch and Kaiser Wilhelm as to the ultimate authority in religion, both were right and both were wrong. Professor Delitsch was right in asserting the absolute truth of science and wrong in withholding a like honour from the Scriptures. And the Emperor was right in asserting the ultimate truth of Scripture in spiritual matters and wholly wrong in intimating that there may be any discrepancy between the Light of Nature and the Word of God.

We are bound to insist that science—not that *quasi* science which is a mere framework of guesses and *non sequiturs,* but that genuine science which is founded on irrefutable facts—is absolutely true as far as it goes. But we are bound also to insist that it does not and cannot go far enough to satisfy our deepest needs. The Light of Nature must be supplemented by revelation, since science properly so-called pauses at the outer borders of spiritual truth. So David, having celebrated the Light of Nature in the antiphony, "The

heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork," goes on straightway to sing the praises of that other Book, which "converteth the soul, maketh wise the simple, rejoiceth the heart, enlighteneth the eyes and endureth forever."

The tendency of our time is to renounce the juridical authority of the Scriptures and fall back on science. The thing which occurred on a certain December day, in the palace of Jehoiakim, is being repeated over and over. Baruch had been summoned to read the fateful prophecies of Jeremiah in the presence of the Court. As he proceeded, the king was more and more offended by the frankness of the Book. "I like not that," he said to his courtier, Jehudi; "cut it out!" And again, "I like not that; cut it out!" And so on, until the penknife had cruelly mutilated the scroll. At length, losing all patience with the faithful message, the king cried, "Cast it into the fire!" A brazier was burning near by; the parchment was thrown in and burned up. Was Jehoiakim relieved? No doubt. The book was gone, but alas, its woes remained and the doom of the nation hastened on!

We have the Bible. We call it our "infallible rule of faith and practice." But the penknife of destructive criticism is at work upon it. A considerable portion which has passed under review is thrown out because it does not comport with the prejudgments of so-called "Biblical experts." So far as the radical scholars of Germany and Oxford are concerned, the Scriptures are substantially burned up. It is not my purpose, however, to enter into the current controversy. There is a party to this controversy which has not been recognized thus far; a party of outsiders who

stand rubbing their hands and crying, Aha! aha! while the Book of the Law is being mutilated and destroyed.

Is it not a curious thing that all unbelievers of every sort should be on one side of this discussion? There is not an infidel circle in the world which does not rejoice at the suggestion that the Bible is not true. The work of destructive criticism commends itself to all "lewd fellows of the baser sort." All dramsellers and gamblers and disreputables are glad to be assured that inroads are being made upon the trustworthiness of Holy Writ. Why should the ungodly hate the Bible so? Why should they make merry at the thought of having it put away? Because "the carnal mind is enmity against God."

It will be worth while to inquire, however, wherein the ungodly would be bettered if the Bible were burned up. Let us suppose that all the present assaults upon the veracity of the Scriptures are to be successful. What then? Were the Bible proved to be wholly unworthy of confidence, were it shown to be dotted everywhere with error as thickly as a leper with his loathsome scales, what advantage would it be to godless men?

I. God would still remain.

The Bible does not make God. It does not even demonstrate His being. It assumes Him. Its opening words are, "In the beginning, God."

It takes God for granted because the Light of Nature reveals Him. The simplest argument in the world is that which phrases itself thus: Design necessitates the thought of a Designer. Were I to say that John Milton made "Paradise Lost" by jumbling letters in a bag and tossing them forth, all reasonable men would

laugh at me; but this would be no more preposterous than the allegation that our universe is "a fortuitous concourse of atoms."

The human mind is so framed that it demands a rational solution of phenomena. We see a ship under sail and raise the inquiry, What keeps her steadfast in her course? It is not enough to answer, "The chart;" for there is something back of the chart. "The rudder, then?" Nay; there is something back of the rudder. "The wheel?" Nay; the argument cannot close until we have found the man at the wheel. This is the mental process not of scientists, nor of philosophers, but of the average man.

Not long ago a gentleman of my acquaintance, a devotee of chess, determined to solve if possible the mystery of "the automatic chess-player." Day after day he engaged in the game with this alleged automaton, and rose always with the conviction that there was an exhibition of something more than a mechanical agency. But he could discover no visible token of it. The mystery was solved at length, however, when from behind a curtain a man appeared, known to him as an expert chess-player, who laughingly said, "You deserve to be undeceived," and proceeded to explain it. A like denouement awaits the earnest seeker after God.

The human mind is so constituted that it cannot accept an effect without a cause, design without a designer, or law without a lawgiver. We say, "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera;" but we know very well that the stars fight not unless there is a captain to marshal them and lead them to the fray. Wherefore, Scripture or no Scripture, we are driven to the conclusion that there is a God.

But while the Light of Nature reveals so much, it fails wholly to show our filial relations with God. All men are theists, but all men cannot say "Abba, Father." The name of the Deity is written across the sky and in the legends of the hills; but we must turn to the Oracles if we would read His name "in fairer lines." The people who dwelt at the foot of Mont Pelee were wont to speak in bated breath of the impersonal monster which, from its hoarse throat, uttered perpetual threats of disaster; but in vain would they hearken beneath the shadow of the mountain for any message of love.

In one of Ruskin's essays he speaks of "the pathetic fallacy of hoping to find in Nature any intimation of divine sympathy with our joys and sorrows." A pathetic fallacy, indeed. And the more we contemplate this pathetic fallacy the more inevitably are we forced to the conclusion that unless we are to abide in perpetual uncertainty, the Light of Nature must be supplemented by the Word of God.

It is of immense importance to a man, living or dying, whether God is his Father or not. It determines the motive with which he formulates his plans and purposes, proceeds to every task and undergoes the trials of life. And the equanimity with which he faces death depends upon it. The freethinker Goethe in his last moments reached forth his hands like one groping in the dark, and cried, "Light! more light!" But Wesley, dying with his Bible by his side, raised his hands heavenward, saying, "The best of all is Immanuel, God with us!"

II. If the Bible were destroyed and we were left to the Light of Nature, we should still retain our sense of duty.

The word means something due or owed. This sense of dueness or obligation, which is expressed in the great word "ought," does not depend on Scripture, but is native to the human soul.

The recent excavations on the site of ancient Babylon have given rise to prolonged controversy as to whether or not the Decalogue existed prior to the giving of the Sinaitic Law. The slight resemblances of the inscriptions to the Ten Commandments are sufficient to corroborate the statement that the Bible did not originate the Moral Law. But whoever supposed that it did? One of the singular glories of the Scriptures is that they formulate a generic intuition and carry it on to certain logical and practical conclusions.

The precepts of the Decalogue were written in the human constitution before they were inscribed on tables of stone. They are interwoven with our very nerves and sinews. In like manner the Sermon on the Mount, which is merely a broad and comprehensive exposition of the Decalogue, was not original with Christ; in that it stated nothing new or extraordinary, but only what men should have been able to recognize without it. The First Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans was written to show that the ethical system of the Bible is simply an authoritative statement of certain laws which are incorporated in the being of the race.

But while the Light of Nature emphasizes the ethical fact, it does not place the seal of divine authority upon it. Here are anonymous precepts; but no divine *imprimatur*. Here are moral distinctions; but no "Thus saith the Lord!" Here is an inward voice; but no manifesto from the throne.

If it be asked, Is not this enough? Let Paul an-

swer, "Yes; for those who have nothing more or better. For when the nations which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts" (Rom. ii: 14). But how much brighter the light and how much greater the privilege of those who hear the "Thus saith the Lord!" There was a time when the people of America had no circulating medium but belts of wampum; but all will probably agree that we are more fortunate in having coin of the realm, bearing "the image and superscription of the king."

Another thing which the Light of Nature cannot furnish is the portrait of the Ideal Man.

We should struggle in the ranks of noble effort, but our Captain would be gone. In all the world there would be no living exemplification of duty, no perfect Man, no Christ to stand on the heights above, inspiring, beckoning, calling, "Follow Me!" And without Christ the thought of perfection would be mere fancy; He is the only *dikaios*. We should philosophize about virtue and manhood and character, but never see an exemplification of it. Thus it is written, "The whole world groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God." This longing is, without Christ, unsatisfied. God still looketh down from heaven to see, and behold! there is none that doeth righteousness, no, not one.

III. If the Bible were destroyed, sin would still remain.

The Scripture did not make man, nor did it turn him aside from the path of righteousness; it merely takes him as it finds him. Sin would remain as a con-

cept; and as a concrete fact, the sole blemish on the otherwise fair face of human life and character; and as a personal conviction. Our consciences would still "make cowards of us all."

When Professor Webster was lying in prison awaiting his execution, he made formal complaint that he was affronted by his keepers, who shouted at him, "O, you bloody man!" and by his fellow-prisoners, who pounded on the walls of his cell, shouting, "O, you bloody man!" A watch was set, but no voice was heard; it was his guilty conscience that cried out against him. It is the voice of conscience that drives the pagan nations to their knees and kindles the fires beneath their altars. No heavenly voice is needed to convince us that we have sinned and that sin carries with it a death-sentence. It is not the Bible that gives us Ixion on the wheel, or Sisyphus vainly rolling the stone up the mountain-side, or Tantalus up to his lips in the ever-receding waters.

In any case, therefore, conscience would remain; but in the absence of revelation we should know no remedy for its sting.

The only balm in Gilead is the Blood of Jesus; it alone has power to deliver from sin. What will you say to the publican who stands beating upon his breast on account of "a certain fearful-looking-for of judgment?" Will you refer him to Law or Energy? Will you tell him about *Anima Mundi?* No; that would be but to mock his anguish. Tell him of the Christ who is revealed in the Scriptures, of whom it is written, "He tasted death for every man;" and, "His blood cleanseth from all sin." Failing in this, you leave him to his despair. For "there is none other

name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."

No student of Comparative Religion can have failed to note the significant fact that of all the so-called sacred books of the world, there is not one except the Bible which proposes a plan of salvation; that is, of the deliverance of the soul from the power and penalty of sin. At this point the voice of Nature is dumb. Scripture alone brings the message. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

IV. Blot out the Bible, and death would still remain; death, and judgment following after.

It needs no revelation from on high to tell us that, as Abd-el-Kader says, "the black camel kneels at every gate." The admonition is written on the gravestones that line the journey of our life.

> The air is full of farewells to the dying
> And mournings for the dead.

But without the Scriptures we should have no intimation of triumph over death. There would be no story of the miracle which was wrought for us in Joseph's garden. At twilight the bearers brought the lifeless body of Jesus and with tears and lamentations laid it away in the new made sepulchre. A stone was rolled before it, the seal of the Roman Empire was placed upon it, and a guard was stationed. And then the King of Terrors came and walked up and down before the grave. "I have conquered the King of Life," he murmured; "I have Him here, and I will hold Him!" The night wore on, and still the grim

patrol walked to and fro. "I have conquered all," he said. "Adam — I slew him. Abraham, called the Friend of God—I slew him. Noah, whom the flood spared—I slew him. Moses went up into a mountain alone, and I met him and slew him there. Methuselah—they thought I had forgotten him; but though he lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years, yet must his biographers add, 'He died.' I slew them all, and, behold, the Prince of Life lies yonder. I have Him and will keep Him!" But in the darkness the flesh of the buried Christ grew warm; the cerements stirred above His breast; His left hand was lifted and loosed the napkin from about the face; His right hand was raised, as though a sceptre were in it, and thereat the stone rolled from the grave's mouth. The King of Terrors fled like a frightened spectre at daybreak, and the King of Life came forth. "Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept. So is come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory! O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

And without the Scriptures there would be no certainty as to the life which follows death.

The dream would still remain, but it would be only a dream. In our Museum of Natural History you may see the mummies of Peruvian children with toys in their hands; of women holding their work-baskets, containing thread and needles and unfinished fabrics; and of men with their weapons of war; buried thus in the hope of resuming their occupations in the future

life. But it was only an eager hope, a fond conceit, a beautiful but unsubstantial product of the imagination. In Scripture the twilight vanishes and the dream becomes a splendid reality. Just yonder through the mists of the river we behold a better country, even an heavenly:

> Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,
> Stand drest in living green.

Just yonder, where the clouds had obscured the mountains, we observe the Holy City, New Jerusalem: "its twelve gates were twelve pearls, and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass." Still yonder, through the rent veil, we behold our Father's house, "Home, sweet Home;" and the redeemed are greeting one another with clasping of hands. O glorious day of knitting severed friendships up!

Thus the bald and barren facts which we hold as spiritual intuitions would still abide were the Scriptures burned up—God, duty, sin and death—but all these truths would lose their warmth and helpfulness, like stars glowing in the distance, cold and unhelpful.

Let those who have thoughtlessly stood by the brazier of Jehoiakim, sympathizing with the enemies of Holy Writ, pause and reflect upon the loss which even they would sustain were the folds of the great curtain, which God has lifted in Revelation, to close again upon us.

If the sun were to be blotted out, we should not be wholly without light; we should still have the light of atomic friction, the phosphorescence, the auroral

gleam which dimly shone in chaos before the great luminary appeared in the heavens. And why should not the sun be blotted out? It is so far beyond us, so enveloped in mystery; a round ball, yonder in space, some millions of miles away, looking not larger than a brazen shield or a dinner-plate; and the maculæ can be seen upon it with the unaided eye. What care we for the sun? But quench it—and, lo, the light is gone from the diamond, the sparkle from the brook, all beauty from the earth; the grass has withered, the birds have ceased their singing. Our world would still be here—or somewhere—rolling round in the silence and solitude of an unbroken twilight.

The Bible is our noonday sun. Its glories are insignificant to those who either deliberately or thoughtlessly decline to receive it. Here are mysteries, vast and incomprehensible. Here are hopes and visions far removed from the world we are living in: but burn the Book—or what is the same, let the world lose its confidence in it—and all that makes life worth living goes from us. Our civil and ecclesiastical freedom, the sanctions of home and social life, hope, triumphant faith, high aspiration—all are gone. A sunless earth is but a faint and inadequate figure of what a Bibleless world would be.

But the Bible is in no danger; it has come to stay; it will glorify life and illuminate the valley of death until the last penitent sinner has gone through heaven's gate. The burning of the Scriptures is an old story. All along the path of history are bonfires of the Book; and still it lives. The brazier of Jehoiakim is a golden altar, the fumes of which, like frankincense, have gone out into all the earth. The wrath of hostile criticism

in seeking to destroy the life of the Scriptures has but crushed its spices, sending forth their fragrance to the skies.

Let us rejoice in our possession. Great is the privilege of those who, possessing the Light of Nature, have the further light of the written Word. But there is no privilege without its corresponding responsibility. We are bound to bring our lives up to the full measure of our light. Truth is a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death. We shall be judged, not like the heathen, by the law which is written in our hearts, but by our clearer light. We shall go to the Judgment, for better or for worse, with the Bible in our hands. The practical lesson is that which was found written on the fly-leaf of Michael Bruce's Bible after his death:

'Tis very vain of me to boast
How small a price this Bible cost;
The Day of Judgment will make clear,
'Twas very cheap or very dear.

VIII

IS THE BIBLE DISPOSED OF ?

IN 1881 a company of archæologists under the leadership of Herr Brugsch, while excavating near the ancient city of Thebes, unearthed a burying-place called " The Gate of the Kings," from which they took thirty-six mummies of royal personages of the eighteenth dynasty, that is, a period prior to 1000 B. C. Among them was Rameses II, or Sesostris, the Pharaoh of the captivity. By the side of these royal mummies were found hampers of food, provided for their use at the resurrection. A strange awakening this! The shrivelled bodies of the dead were carried forth on the shoulders of Arabs into the light of the Nineteenth Century of the Christian Era! They were wrapped in strips of byssus, which were inscribed with cabalistic sentences from the " Book of the Dead," the Scriptures of ancient Egypt. How superannuated this book! How far behind the progress of events these worthies of long ago!

But suppose that, from among that imposing company of worthies, a princess had calmly risen with all the ancient dignity of her high station, light in her eyes and unabated strength in her limbs, and had unfolded a scroll, written in our current speech, covering all the progress of the intervening centuries and fully abreast of the spirit of this age, would not that have been accounted an extraordinary thing?

Yet this is indeed a veritable fact. Our Religion is as old as the Pharaohs and as fresh as this morning's dew. In the ancient personification of Wisdom it speaks on this wise: "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the world was" (Prov. viii: 23). She holds in her hands the Scriptures, which were sealed some thousands of years ago with a *Finis,* a word standing like a challenge to all succeeding ages, "Supplant me—supersede me—supplement me—if you can!"

It is our present purpose to show that the religion set forth in the Scriptures was in the beginning adjusted to all the vicissitudes of time. It can never be superannuated, because it was prepared in the divine counsels with a definite and comprehensive view to progress. It can never be supplemented, because it was completed once for all. It can never be amended, because it was wholly true when the divine seal was put upon it. Its truths and precepts, compiled largely in the barbaric days of the world's infancy, are applicable to all the needs and conditions of this enlightened age. It is "literature" indeed, but it is the miracle of literature, in that, being true and complete and applicable to universal need, it stands forever.

I. Let us mark its Anticipations of Science.

It is frequently said that the Bible, as a handbook of religion, was not intended to be scientific. Granted: but it was intended to be true, scientifically as every other way. It claims to be "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work." If the hypothetical

book in the hand of the Egyptian princess were found to be inaccurate in its statements as to the common facts of observation, it could scarcely claim to be trustworthy in its averments as to things lying beyond the cognizance of the senses. *Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus.* If the scientific propositions of the Bible are disproven we may as well set out in quest of some more trustworthy guide in spiritual things. It is not likely that blind faith will follow a leader who has failed to commend himself to open eyes.

It has pleased God to reveal Himself in two Books. One of these is the Bible and the other is the Book of Nature, written in footprints on the rocks and in the luminous pathways of the stars. In one of Longfellow's poems he sings of the latter thus:

Nature, the old nurse, took
  A child upon her knee,
Saying: "Here is a story-book
  Thy Father has written for thee."

"Come wander with me," she said,
  "Into regions yet untrod;
And read what is still unread
  In the manuscripts of God."

And he wandered away and away
  With Nature, the dear old nurse,
Who sang to him night and day
  The rhymes of the universe.

And whenever the way seemed long,
  Or his heart began to fail,
She would sing a more wonderful song,
  Or tell a more marvelous tale.

It is obvious that if the Bible is true, it must correspond in every particular with the statements of this Book of Nature as they are being interpreted by science. Not that it must assent to every theory of so-called science; for it is a matter of common fame that multitudes of such propositions come and go like mists before the morning sun. But the Bible as a revelation, finished and sealed with the divine seal, must be in exact harmony with all the demonstrated facts of science. And if this shall appear, then it follows that the Scriptures, as a completed book, were and are continuously abreast of this and every age.

Let us pause to affirm, at this point, that the so-called conflict between science and the Scriptures is wholly an artificial issue. It was not the Church, as such, that opposed Galileo standing for the Copernican System, but it was scientists within the Church who represented the Aristotelian school in affirming a "closed universe" with the earth at its centre. In point of fact, Galileo was proceeding along Scriptural lines in standing not for a "firmament" but for an "open expanse" (R. V. margin). He was a victim, not of ecclesiastical persecution, but of the scholastic science of his time. If the Bible is trustworthy it is impossible that it should, in whole or in any part, be at odds with scientific truth.

How stands the matter as to the Origin of things?

The Bible is the Book of Origins; and science has always been concerned with the same problem. It was a scientific maxim of the ancients, *Ex nihilo nihil fit;* that is, "Out of nothing, nothing comes:" but in the progress of investigation along the centuries there has been an abandonment of that maxim. The eternity of

matter is not affirmed now; on the contrary scientists are generally agreed in assuming a beginning of things and they are engaged in searching after it. So that science has returned to the Scriptures, whose great scientific word is *bara,* that is, "Created out of nothing." This *bara,* however, cannot be demonstrated, in the nature of the case, but must be received by faith; as it is written, "By faith we understand that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Heb. xi: 3). The utmost that science has been able to do thus far is to trace by a series of clever hypotheses all existence to an original primordial germ; and there it halts bewildered. At this point the Scriptures come to its assistance, going one step further, a stupendous step, and making the sublime assertion, "In the beginning, God."

A further point of agreement is in the Order of Creation.

In the Book of Wisdom it stands as follows: Heaven, earth, light, air, grass, herbs, trees, stars, fish, amphibia, fowls, creeping things, cattle, man. Sir J. W. Dawson says, "The order of creation, as thus stated in Genesis, is faultless in the light of modern science;" and the majority of trustworthy scientists will probably agree with him. If so, the Scriptural anticipation must be in the nature of either a miracle or a strange coincidence. Which is the more probable? Let us see: suppose we take the first fifteen letters of the alphabet and shake them up. If now, on drawing them out, we were to find them arranged in their proper consecutive order, that would be a strange coincidence; how strange will appear from the mathematical fact that the possible permutations of these

fifteen letters are 1,307,674,368,000! That is, the chances are more than a trillion to one against the probability that the order of creation as given in Scripture should, by mere coincidence, correspond with the order as announced in modern science. To thoughtful minds this is a significant fact and it must surely create a strong presumption that the Book of Wisdom is something more than common literature.

And again as to the Unity of Creation.

The tendency of modern science is wholly toward an abandonment of the position that the universe is "a fortuitous concourse of atoms." It affirms the unity of force. It affirms the unity of design, also, all things being adjusted to their environment and their necessary use. It affirms the unity of the race; since, however you may differentiate between the Caucasian and the Ethiopian, the same life-current flowing through their veins seems to say, "God hath made of one blood all nations of men." The lines of scientific research converge as they move backward; the stars in their courses appearing to obey some mandate from a central throne and all the types of mundane existence seeming to bend toward a common source. All this is distinctly scriptural. But again, where Science of necessity halts with knitted brows, Wisdom goes on to say, "In the beginning, God."

II. We turn now to a consideration of the anticipation of events; that is, Prophecy.

It is quite the fashion for rationalistic critics, such as Kuenen and his followers, to deny the supernatural in prophecy and affirm that "the sole mission of the prophets was to convey religious truth to the people of their time;" the intimation being that they were

impostors, inadvertently or otherwise, when they undertook to predict future events. But to deny the supernatural factor in prophecy is to tear the Book of Wisdom to tatters; for it is a book of predictions from beginning to end.

As to the Jews; there is an unbroken line of prophecy respecting their history, in detail and particular. It begins at Ur of the Chaldees, where Abraham, the father of the chosen people, gazing upward at the starry heavens, hears the Voice, saying, "So shall thy seed be." It follows his journey along the Euphrates into the land of promise, continuing with his children in the hard bondage of Egypt, the Exodus, the weary journey of the wilderness, the settlement in Palestine, the establishment of the kingdom and its division, the Babylonish captivity, the restoration by the decree of Cyrus who is mentioned by name a hundred and forty years before his birth, the rebuilding of the Holy City and the restoration of the ancestral form of worship, the slow but sure decline of spiritual vigour, the Roman conquest and the dispersion of the people among the nations of the earth. To one who studies the close correspondence between these prophecies and events as they have occurred in the history of this wonderful people there is nothing strange in the reply which was given by the chaplain of Frederick the Great, when asked for a miracle: "The Jews, your Majesty."

And the same correspondence is observed in a frank contemplation of the prophecies concerning the Great Powers of the pagan world. The only way to solve the problem of the image which was set up in the plain of Dura, and of the seven beasts which rose from the waters of Chebar, is either to admit the supernatural

in prophecy or to cut the Gordian knot, as rationalists do, by pronouncing the Book of Daniel an impudent *ex post facto* fraud.

The immense improbability of the fulfilment of such prophecies is worth considering. Macaulay once ventured into the realms of prediction, when he intimated that perhaps, in the remote future, some traveller from New Zealand might, in the midst of a vast solitude, "take his stand on a broken arch of the London bridge to sketch the ruins of St. Paul's." His words represent the very summit of improbability; yet there are a thousand prophecies in Scripture equally improbable, uttered at times when the world-powers were in their glory; and not one of them has gone by default. Tyre, Sidon, Egypt, Babylon, Assyria; they have turned out precisely as the ancient prophets said they would do. The graves of nations line the path of history; and from their solitary ruins the owl and bittern, the fox and jackal bear testimony to the exact truth of the Word of God.

But most marvellous are the prophecies which centre in Christ. They run like a golden thread through Scripture from the protevangel in Paradise to the words of Malachi, who stands in the late twilight of the Old Economy, torch in hand, saying, "The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings!" These prophecies are many, minute, definite and climacteric. They have to do with the miraculous birth, the life and character, the betrayal, sufferings, singular death, burial and resurrection of Christ. As to their Messianic intent and their distinct fulfillment we have the testimony of Jesus Himself who, after His ascension, said to His incredulous disciples on the way to

Emmaus, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself (Luke xxiv: 25-27).

By the certitude of the prophecies which have been confirmed thus far, we are led to place our confidence in those which are still unfulfilled.

The New Testament as well as the Old is in many particulars a prophetic book. It points forward to Pentecost and to the procession of events succeeding it; to the great propaganda and the Gospel triumphs of the centuries, to the vast missionary enterprises now being carried on, and to great Armageddon which shall close the present order of things. If the prophecies of this Book have been so accurately confirmed in the history of the past, are we not justified in believing that not one jot or one tittle shall pass away until all be fulfilled? Aye, the Lord, in pursuance of its predictions, shall go forth conquering and to conquer as He has done hitherto, until His glory shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

III. Let us attend now to the Bible's anticipations of doctrinal truth.

The Bible alone of all the so-called sacred books yields a "system" of theology. The oldest of Christian symbols is the Apostles' Creed; the origin of which, though not definitely known, could not have been later than the period succeeding the Apostolic Age. It is a noteworthy fact that in this historic creed we have a compendium of practically all the doctrines of the Christian faith. For eighteen centuries the con-

troversialists have been discussing its propositions; but they have not added to it a single doctrine nor subtracted a single doctrine from it. Its two fundamental truths are God the Father and the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ for the salvation of men.

As to the Fatherhood of God the world responds and will ever respond, Yea and Amen. The suggestion that He is force or energy or any other impersonal thing will never touch the heart and conscience of the race. We must have a God who has eyes to see, a heart to pity and an omnipotent arm to help us. It is quite safe to assert, that however this truth may be antagonized from time to time, the world will never outlive or supplant it.

As to Christ, the Incarnation of God, He has come down through history, a Figure of more and more commanding influence from age to age. The testimony of His contemporaries, "Never man spake like this man," is the intensified conviction of our time. All the investigations of philosophers, with all the contradictions of His enemies, have not dimmed the sublime import of His teaching nor proven the falsity of a single word that ever fell from His lips. It is with these words of Jesus as with atoms of oxygen, of which Huxley says, "It matters not into how many myriad substances—animal, plant and mineral—an atom of oxygen may have entered, nor what isolation it may have undergone, bond or free, it retains its own qualities. It matters not how many millions of years may have elapsed during these changes, age cannot wither or weaken it. Amid the fierce play of the mighty agencies to which it has been subjected it remains unbroken and unworn." Thus, I say, it is with the words

of the great Teacher; in passing through the stupendous test of the centuries, they have undergone no change. They touch human life at every point in its circumference and formulate every truth which stands as demonstrated in the spiritual realm. All the discoveries of philosophy have not produced a single additional truth; they have merely thrown new light upon the teachings of Christ. Every doctrine which has been advanced, from time to time, in opposition to this teaching, has been pronounced a heresy and inevitably demonstrated to be false by the stern logic of events. No New Theology has thus far been able to vindicate itself; its only hope of vindication, in the clear light of history, being in its final adjustment to the doctrinal system of Him who said, "I am the truth."

IV. It remains to consider the scriptural anticipations of human need, as illustrated in the practical life and experience of nations and men.

In the teachings of the Book there are two great principles which underlie all permanent national life, to wit, The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. The word which Paul uttered on Mars' Hill did but echo the teachings of the Old Testament and the later words of Jesus: "The God whose offspring we are hath made of one blood all nations of men."

In pursuance of these principles we are not surprised to find that the laws and jurisprudence of the civilized nations are modelled after the pattern given in the Mount. The laws regulating our domestic, social, civil and industrial life get their original suggestion from the Mosaic code. The Theocracy of Israel was an ideal form of government, a premature Utopia, but destined to be re-established in the Golden Age.

It is sometimes affirmed, as an objection to the Scriptures, that there are portions which cannot be read aloud. It is true; but this is an argument in their favour; since they were not written to be read aloud but to regulate all human life. There are things occurring in every Civil Court which cannot be proclaimed on the housetops. There are surgical operations in every hospital, necessary and helpful, which it would not be well to perform before the public eyes. The Bible is intended to be a perfect system of moral pathology and therapeutics. It anticipates all public crimes and private vices, and deals heroically with them. On its positive side it favours every benevolent form of enterprise; it furnishes a stable basis for schools and hospitals and reformatories. The world's welfare is all within its pages; the secret of true civilization is here. The wise enactments of all parliaments, the primal form of Magna Charta, the salutary decisions of all honest courts; these are here. As the Angel Muriel, in Paradise Lost, is said to have descended to earth in a sunbeam, so has the religion of this Wondrous Book come down with all the blessings of civilization to the children of men.

And above all it is adjusted to the need of individual souls. Ah, here the word of the Lord has been tried in the hottest fires! "The old ha' Bible" lies on the table in the cotter's home, and its truths strike the sweetest note in our domestic life. The sociological problems of our time are being discussed, avowedly, along the lines marked out in Holy Writ, where the keynote ever is "the greatest good of the greatest number, here and always." In our business life we are finding that the teachings of this Book make honest

and earnest men. In our political life it stands guarantee for an upright administration. In our industrial life it presents the Golden Rule as the great secret for the solution of all the vexed problems of capital and labour. In personal life it stands by a man in the bitter hour of temptation, in the stern discharge of duty, under the heavy burdens of sorrow and in the trying hour of death. Touch it wherever you will, the religion of this book stands the test of experience. It is a religion to live by; it is a religion to die by.

The one pre-eminent fact by which this religion stands or falls is the salvation it offers in Christ crucified. And here again it stands solitary and alone. There are other sacred books and other religions which offer us religious doctrines and ethical codes; but there is none that answers this question: "What shall a man do to be delivered from the record of a sinful past?" Coleridge speaks of a man's living

> As one that on a lonesome road
> Doth walk in fear and dread,
> Because he knows a ghastly fiend
> Doth close behind him tread.

This is the grim spectre of the past. He is a brave man who dare, without the Gospel of Christ, look over his shoulder. The one consistent and continual call of Wisdom in this Book of Books is, "Come now and let us reason together: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool!"

In view of these facts we may well be confident of the future. The religion which has endured the fierce ordeals of the past will not fail in the coming days.

It was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the world was; and it was adjusted, every way, to all the possible progress of the ages. If a new religion were to be invented by the combined wisdom of all living philosophers, it could not add a single truth to the contents of this Book of Wisdom. All was said here, once for all.

We need not fear the attacks of unbelief. A Spanish frigate lay all night in the Indian Ocean, firing broadsides at a craft which loomed up in the distance. Not a shot was returned. The day broke and, lo, yonder a mighty rock rose from the sea. Of what avail were those broadsides? So the religion of the Scriptures, as an impregnable rock, resists, without reply, the attacks of its foes. Our vision is dim, because the smoke of battle is around us; but wait until the day breaks! "The voice said, Cry! And I answered, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever!"

THE UNCHANGEABLE PLAN OF SALVATION

Lamm, das gelitten, und Löwe, der siegreich gerungen!
Blutendes Opfer, und Held, der die Hölle bezwungen!
Brechendes Herz,
Das sich aus irdischem Schmerz
Ueber die Himmel geschwungen!

HENSSER-SCHWEIZER

IX

THE ATONEMENT IN MODERN THOUGHT

IT was the mission of Isaiah, the evangelical prophet, to announce the Vicarious Death of Christ for the salvation of sinners; but he was met by incredulity on every side. "Who hath believed our report," he complains; "and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" In vain did he present the Messiah as the One to be desired: they said, "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him." In vain did he point to the innocent Victim on the Cross, bearing their griefs and carrying their sorrows; they answered, "He is stricken, smitten of God and afflicted!" Thus the "report" of God's pardoning grace in the sacrifice of the Cross has ever been repugnant to the sinful hearts of men.

It devolved on Paul, in like manner, to "excuse the scandal of the Cross." He said, "The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness but to them which are called, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (I Cor. i: 22-24).

A book has recently appeared, called "The Atonement in Modern Religious Thought," in which seventeen men of more or less distinction as theological

teachers display their ingenuity, for the most part, in eliminating the Cross as a saving factor from the religion of Christ. No better illustration could be found of the fact that the Greeks are still seeking after wisdom by lantern-light, while refusing the authority and infallible guidance of the Scriptures. The key-note of the volume referred to is struck in the Publishers' Note: "This book may be taken as an answer to the question whether the Christian consciousness of to-day, in the view of modern historical, critical and ethical investigation, has any fresh affirmation to make, or any new attitude to assume, on this central doctrine of the Church's faith." And the point of its argument may be inferred from the following words on the last page: "Christianity will not evangelize the nations on the strength of an inspired Bible and a doctrine of the Atonement struck through with Hebrew ritualism, and construed by medieval logic from facts that have turned out to be composite legends." This is interesting, to put it mildly, in view of the progress of Christian civilization, and of the fact that some hundreds of millions of people on earth, and a great multitude which no man can number in heaven, profess to have been saved through the scriptural doctrine of the Vicarious Death of the Lamb of God.

The first view of the Atonement, which calls for our consideration in a survey of modern religious thought, is the Arian or Unitarian view; which is an open and avowed denial of the doctrine, *in toto*.

It is stated thus by one of its leading advocates: "I do not believe, with the Calvinist, in the doctrine of vicarious Atonement, or in other words, that the sins of men were imputed or transferred to Christ, who

suffered in their room and stead, to render God placable to divine justice. I do not believe this, because guilt is personal and cannot be transferred. Punishment might be inflicted on the innocent instead of the guilty, but this would not remove the stain of moral turpitude from the offender; and, instead of satisfying justice, it would, in itself, be essentially unjust. Were a human tribunal to permit convicted criminals to escape the penalties justly due to their offenses, and to punish innocent and virtuous men in their room, would not the whole world exclaim against such a violation of the plainest principles of equity? Yet such is the charge imputed against the Deity in Calvinistic creeds! I do not, therefore, believe in their doctrine of satisfaction, because it impeaches the justice of God; and I further reject it because it robs Him of His mercy and free grace. If justice be satisfied, mercy has no act to perform; and if the debt be paid, the gift of pardon cannot be free."

It will be observed that this statement rests upon a fundamental denial of the Divinity of Christ. If Christ were a mere man, as the Arians assert, it makes little or no difference whether or why or how He died for us. His death is practically no more to us than the fact that Socrates drank the cup of hemlock or that John Huss was burned at the stake, since our ultimate salvation can have no vital relation to it.

It rests, also, upon the assertion that the innocent cannot suffer for the guilty. This is, on the one hand, a question of fact; the fact being that the innocent do suffer for the guilty and are so suffering all about us; kings for the subjects, parents for their children and everybody for the misdeeds of his forebears. Is not

sympathy the noblest as well as the commonest thing in human experience? At this point our nature reaches its highest and best. We esteem above all the unselfish man who voluntarily bears the burdens of others. Should we not, then, expect something of the same sort in our Father? He made us in His likeness. It would be monstrous if God did not sympathize with His children who have fallen into trouble. The Cross is the very highest expression of sympathy in the universe. The Atonement is what we should expect. It is just like God. It is His response to universal need. It fits our circumstances. As Coleridge said, "The Gospel finds me." It answers the deepest longing of earnest souls. Dr. Chamberlain relates, that among those converted by his preaching at the sacred city of Benares was a devotee who had dragged himself many miles upon his knees and elbows to bathe in the Ganges. He had at the bottom of his heart the common conviction of sin and desire of cleansing. "If I can but reach the Ganges," he thought, "this shame and bondage and fear will be taken away." Weak and emaciated from his long pilgrimage, he dragged himself down to the river's edge and, praying to Gunga, crept into it; then withdrawing, he lay upon the river's bank and moaned, "The pain is still here!" At that moment he heard a voice from the shadow of a banyan-tree near by. It was the missionary telling the story of the Cross. The devotee listened, and drank it in, rose to his knees, then to his feet; then, unable to restrain himself, clapped his hands and cried, "That's what I want! That's what I want!" It is what we all want; the whole creation has from time immemorial groaned and travailed for it.

And, on the other hand, it is a question of covenant; the truth being that there are three parties only to the Covenant of Grace; to wit, God the Father, God the Son, and man the sinner: if God the Father is willing to send His Son, and if the Son is willing to suffer and die, and if I, the sinner, the party of the third part, am willing to be saved in this manner, there is no person in the universe who is competent to object to it.

The other pillar of the Arian heresy is the assertion that the sacrificial view of the Atonement robs God of free Grace. This is a strange position to take in view of the fact that grace is only possible by reason of the satisfaction rendered to Justice in the vicarious death of Christ. Thus only is God able to be "just and the justifier of the ungodly." This is the substance of Paul's argument (Romans 5th chapter, and elsewhere).

The second view of the Atonement which requires our consideration is known as the Moral Influence Theory.

Its chief advocate in modern controversy is Dr. Bushnell, who said, "The work of Christ terminates not in the release of penalties by due compensation, but in the transformation of character and the rescue in that manner of guilty men from the retributive causations provoked by their sins." In this view the work of Christ was purely exemplary, as setting forth the beauty of holiness. His life was indeed a wonderful life, recorded briefly in the monograph, "He went about doing good." What a world this would be if all were to follow in His steps! His death, also, was a wonderful death, the most stupendous exhibit of self-sacrifice that the world ever saw. All the heroism of all the heroes who have gone to the stake and the gallows

for truth and righteousness is not to be compared with the heroism of Him who "set His face steadfastly" toward the Cross. "Go and do thou likewise," say the advocates of the Moral Theory, "and thou shalt be saved!"

Now this theory is admirable as far as it goes; but, unfortunately, it does not go far enough. It presents an objective view of holy living and holy dying which, if left by itself, is merely a tantalizing mockery to impotent men. For never in all the history of struggling humanity has one been able to live like Jesus or to die like Him.

This view breaks down at the vital point; since it offers no expiation of guilt, no vindication of law, no reconciliation with God. It makes no disposition of the mislived past. And what becomes of "the handwriting of ordinances that was against us?"

It fails because there is no blood in it; and "without the shedding of blood there is no remission." It leaves out ransom, expiation, sacrifice; and, so doing, it fails utterly to meet the demands of the case.

Its failure is recognized by Dr. Bushnell himself who, in the conclusion of his volume on "The Vicarious Sacrifice," makes the following pathetic confession of its utter inadequacy:

"In the facts (of our Lord's passion), outwardly regarded, there is no sacrifice, or oblation, or atonement, or propitiation, but simply a living and dying thus and thus. The facts are impressive; the person is clad in a wonderful dignity and beauty; the agony is eloquent of love; and the Cross a very shocking murder triumphantly met. And if then the question arises, how we are to use such a history so as to be

reconciled by it, we hardly know in what way to begin. How shall we come unto God by help of this martyrdom? How shall we turn it, or turn ourselves under it, so as to be justified and set in peace with God? Plainly there is a want here, and this want is met by giving a thought-form to the facts which is not in the facts themselves. They are put directly into the moulds of the altar, and we are called to accept the crucified God-man as our sacrifice, an offering or oblation for us, our propitiation; so as to be sprinkled from our evil conscience, washed, purged, purified, cleansed from our sin. Instead of leaving the matter of the facts just as they occurred, there is a reverting to familiar forms of thought, made familiar partly for this purpose; and we are told, in brief, to use the facts just as we would the sin-offerings of the altar, and make an altar grace of them, only a grace complete and perfect, an offering once for all. . . . So much is there in this that, without these forms of the altar, we should be utterly at a loss in making any use of the Christian facts, that would set us in a condition of practical reconciliation with God. Christ is good, beautiful, wonderful; His disinterested love is a picture by itself; His forgiving patience melts into my feelings; His passion rends open my heart; but what is He for, and how shall He be made unto me the salvation I want? One word—HE IS MY SACRIFICE—opens all to me, and beholding Him, with all my sin upon Him, I count Him my offering. I come unto God by Him and enter into the holiest by His blood."

The third theory of the Atonement is known as the Governmental Theory.

Its chief advocate was the learned Grotius, whose

views were antagonized by the Synod of Dort. In this theory God is regarded as the Moral Governor of the universe, who, as such, cannot allow sin to go unpunished, but is bound to vindicate the law. He does this in the tragedy of the Cross, which was intended to show, once for all, His abhorrence of sin.

In this view the Atonement is purely didactic. The great lesson which it teaches is that God hates sin; hates it so that He cries, "Awake, O sword, against my fellow!" and lays its frightful burden on His well-beloved Son. In this He is alleged to present an object lesson such that men, beholding it, shall be filled with abhorrence and cry, "Behold what sin in its ripeness will do!" The ultimate purpose in laying this punishment on Jesus is to reform the sinner and to protect society by preventing sin.

But observe, such an Atonement does not really touch the sinner's sin or in any wise dispose of it. On the contrary, it leaves the record of the past against him. It deals with sin only as an offense against society; taking no cognizance of its intrinsic sinfulness. It treats man as a rabid creature that must be cured or killed for the public good. Sin as such has no connection with penalty as such. No room is left for David's cry, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness; and according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions! Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." The theory is wholly inadequate because it omits the vital necessity of sacrifice. It makes the death of Christ a glorious martyrdom, not an expiation of sin.

If, in pursuance of this view, there is to be any real

pardon it must be despite the law, despite justice and despite the truth of God. I heard a "liberal" preacher say, in a recent discourse, "God requires no expiation as antecedent to pardon. He is distinctly a Father and treats us in that way. A father gives his boy an example in arithmetic to do upon his slate. The boy tries in vain, again and again, to solve it. At length he comes, slate in hand, and tearfully confesses, 'See, father; how I have tried and failed!' Now what does this father do? Demand an expiation? O, no. He takes the sponge and erases all the mistakes, saying, 'Don't worry, my boy; go and try again.'" This might answer if sin were only a "mistake." It might answer if there were no sanctity in law, and if God's truth were not pledged to the penal consequences of sin. God has promised, indeed, to blot out sin, but the sponge with which He erases the record of the past is a sponge dipped in blood; as it is written, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin;" and "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission."

The fourth view of the Atonement is that which has prevailed from time immemorial in the universal Church, to wit, the Substitutionary Theory.

Christ in the Atonement changed places with us. He stood in our room before the bar of justice. "He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and with His stripes we are healed." This view is so firmly established that it is a moral certainty that neither the sign-seeking Jews nor the wisdom-seeking Greeks, will ever be able to overthrow it.

(1) To begin with, it rests upon a Scriptural basis. It is distinctly in line with the red trail of sacrifice

which runs from the beginning to the end of the oracles of God.

No sooner had man sinned than the protevangel spoke of the "Seed of the woman" suffering for sin. The first altar, reared by the close gate of paradise, prophesied of the slain Lamb of God. As the years passed, the prophets declared, with ever-increasing clearness and particularity, the coming sacrifice. David sang of it in his Messianic psalms. Isaiah drew the portrait of the agonizing Christ as if he were gazing on the Cross: "He is a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows. And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." The same truth was emphasized by Moses, Daniel, Zechariah, all the prophets down to Malachi, who, waving his torch in the twilight of the long darkness which closed the Old Economy said, "The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings!" Open the Book where we will, the face of Jesus, so marred more than any man's yet divinely beautiful, looks out upon us.

This view alone explains the blood that flowed over the altars of the Old Economy and the repetitive prophecies of the slain Lamb. The rites and symbols of the Old Testament all find their fulfillment here. Their centre was the tabernacle. Enter it and observe how it is everywhere sprinkled with blood. Here is blood flowing down the brazen altar, blood on the ewer, the golden candlestick, the table of shewbread, the altar of incense; blood on the floor, the ceiling, on posts and pillars, on knops and blossoms, everywhere. Lift the curtain and pass into the holiest of all—but not without blood on your palms. Here is blood on

the ark of the covenant, blood on the mercy-seat—blood, blood everywhere. What does it mean? Nothing, absolutely nothing, unless it declares the necessity of the Cross.

This view alone explains the teachings of Jesus as to the necessity of His being "lifted up," and His announcement that He was to "give His life a ransom for many." This alone furnishes the key to the elaborate arguments of Paul and the other apostles respecting the appointed method of reconciliation with God.

It is vain to reply that man needs no reconciliation; since "the carnal mind is at enmity with God." And it is equally vain to say that God needs no reconciliation; for He is "angry with the wicked every day." The throne of reconciliation is at Calvary; where the God-man uplifting one pierced hand to heaven and stretching the other downward to the earth, brings a sinful but penitent man and a loving but justly offended God into a sweet and eternal at-one-ment.

(2) The Substitutionary view of the Atonement is rational. No view of this or of any other doctrine can be permanently acceptable which is not consistent with common sense; that is, the reason of the average man. Wherefore, God says to the sinner in anticipation of the vicarious sacrifice, "Come now and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. i: 18). The words "Let us reason together" are significant; as if God, in infinite condescension, were to say, "Sit thou there and I here, and let us talk this matter over." It is thus that He commends the true doctrine to sinful men;

and the great multitude of the redeemed pay tribute to its reasonableness, singing as they encircle the throne, "Worthy art Thou to receive honour and glory and power and dominion; for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us by Thy blood." (Rev. vii:9-17).

(3) This view of the Atonement is effective. It disposes of every valid objection that could prevent a sinner's entering into the kingdom of heaven. If he were to present himself at the gate of The Law, crying, "Open unto me!" a voice from within would answer, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die!" If he were to present himself at the gate of Justice, a voice would say, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap!" If at the gate of Holiness, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord!" But let him knock at the gate called "Mercy;" and it will open wide; and the voice of the Lord Himself will say, "Enter in! I have died for thee. I have fulfilled the Law and vindicated Justice in thy behalf. I have imputed unto thee the Righteousness which is by faith. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" Thus it is written, "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us."

(4) The simplicity of this view of the Atonement commends it. And let it be said here that no theory of the Atonement which is not simple can, by any possibility, be true. Our religion is not for philosophers, but for all sorts and conditions of men. It rests upon no proposition which requires the controversial agony of nineteen centuries to elaborate and formulate it.

Its path to heaven is so plain that a "wayfaring man though a fool need not err therein" (Isa. xxxv:8).

The most lamentable case of spiritual ignorance that I have ever known was that of a boy of sixteen years whom I was called to see on his deathbed. He was conscious of sin and troubled by a certain fearful looking-for of judgment, but he knew absolutely nothing of Christ. I told him the story of the Cross as simply as I could; then I read the Fifty-third of Isaiah, with portions of the Third of John and the Eighth of Romans; presenting, as clearly as possible, the fact that Jesus had borne our sins in His own body on the tree. The boy asked faintly, "But what must I do?" The old, old question! I answered, "Only believe; be willing to be saved that way." He then said, "Go away now. I think I have it. But don't say anything more or you'll mix me up. Come to-morrow." When I returned the next day, the mother met me wringing her hands: the boy had died in the night. But he died murmuring softly to himself, "Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!" So sinners enter into glory: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye become as this little child ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

In any case, it is obvious that we are to receive the doctrine of the Atonement as God has been pleased to reveal it. The Scriptures are ultimate, here; it behooves us to receive whatsoever they say, adding nothing to it and subtracting nothing from it. One of the conspicuous illustrations of this doctrine in the Old Economy, was the scape-goat. The High-Priest laid his hands upon its head, as if placing there the sins of the people; after which it was led "by a fit man" into "the land of Azazel." The rabbis say that the fit

man cast the goat over a high cliff; if so, he did more than he was required to do. Let it suffice that the goat was led away to Azazel, to No-man's Land, to the Land of Forgetfulness. See it vanishing from sight in the distance! Thus do our sins pass into oblivion: so that God remembers them no more against us.

But the one object-lesson of the Atonement which is presented all through the Scriptures is the Lamb of God. The suggestion of the lamb involves the inevitable thought of sacrifice. "The Lamb of God" suggests the divine origin of redemption and the offering of the only-begotten One. "The Lamb slain" necessitates the thought of Atoning blood. And the word "Behold" sets forth the vital relation of this doctrine to the soul of a man. Look and live! He that believeth shall be saved. Wherefore, whatever else we may contemplate, in all the realm of human thought and experience, let us with open eyes and comprehending soul "behold the Lamb of God."

X

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

THE name by which the early Christians were familiarly known was "The People of that Way." In the year 36 the Sanhedrin issued a commission to Saul of Tarsus authorizing him to arrest any whom he might find "of the Way, whether they were men or women, and to bring them bound unto Jerusalem" (Acts ix:2). In the year 58, twenty-two years later, the same Saul, now an apostle of Christ, made a defense from the steps of the castle of Antonia, in which he said, "I persecuted this Way unto the death, binding and delivering into prison both men and women" (Acts xxii:4).

The name thus given to the followers of Christ is significant for many reasons. The question has been raised in some quarters as to whether religion is dogma or life. In fact, our religion in the last reduction is neither dogma nor life; it is a Way from sin into the Kingdom of God. Its bedrock is truth, its pavement is character, its destination is eternal life.

It is a plain Way; as indicated in the prophecy, "A Highway shall be there and a Way, and it shall be called the Way of Holiness; the wayfaring man though a fool shall not err therein."

It is an old Way: "This is the Way the prophets went; the Way that leads from banishment." Old: yet never to be superseded; having been adjusted in

the beginning to the needs of all ages and generations of sinners. Wherefore, progress can never improve upon it.

Let it be said at the outset that one thing only is needful in order to become a follower of Christ; to wit, that one should believe in Him, but, before we come to that, we must touch upon a matter of preliminary importance.

Preliminary

A man must repent before he believes in Christ (Mark i:15). Now repentance is not in itself a saving grace, having value only as it leads to something further on. The pain of a physical malady has no curative virtue; but it is this pain that inclines the patient to ring the doctor's bell. So John the Baptist goes before Christ with his cry, "Repent ye!" since without repentance there is no adequate sense of need, nor disposition to accept Christ.

We must get a clear understanding of repentance. It suggests at the outset, an apprehension of sin as *a fact;* not a figment of the imagination, not "a belief of mortal mind;" not an infection due to environment, and therefore involving no personal accountability; but a distinct, flagrant violation of holy law, by which the sinner is brought into rebellion against God.

And sin must be apprehended, furthermore, as a *calamitous* fact, that is, involving an adequate penalty: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." A true penitent recognizes the justice of the punishment which is imposed upon him; as did the repentant thief, when he said to his comrade, "We indeed are condemned

justly." One who spends his time in trying to explain away hell and "the unquenchable fire" and "the worm that dieth not," is not a penitent man.

And sin must be furthermore recognized as a concrete or *personal* fact. It is not enough to acknowledge the incontrovertible presence of sin in the world around us. The important thing is, that this sin inheres in me. So David prayed, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according unto Thy lovingkindness; for I have sinned and done this evil in Thy sight." He had always known, in general terms, that adultery was a fearful thing; but when it pointed its gaunt finger at him in the watches of the night and hissed, "Bathsheba!" it brought him to his knees.

And this conviction of sin must be followed by a *resolution to forsake it.* The true penitent fears his sin, hates it, loathes it, abhors it, and determines to quit it.

But observe, all this is merely preliminary to the one thing needful. There is no virtue in repentance *per se.* The penitent is not saved; he has only discovered his need of salvation. He knows his malady; now how shall he be cured of it? To pause here is death. One in a sinking boat must not be satisfied with stopping the leak; the boat must be baled out. A man head-over-ears in debt cannot recover his credit by resolving to pay cash in the future; he must somehow cancel his past obligations. If a penitent were never to commit another sin, the "handwriting of ordinances" would still be against him. The record of the past remains; and it will confront him in the Judgment unless it be disposed of. The past! The mis-lived past! What shall be done about it?

This brings us to the matter in hand: What shall I do to be saved? or How shall I become a Christian?

The One Thing Needful

Our Lord at the beginning of His ministry said to Nicodemus, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that *whosoever believeth on Him,* should not perish, but have everlasting life." And to make the matter perfectly clear to this learned rabbi, He resorted to the kindergarten method, using an object lesson: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up (that is, crucified), that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." *So the one thing needful is to believe in Christ.*

The same truth was repeated over and over in the teachings of Jesus and of His disciples as well. To the jailer of Philippi who, in sudden conviction, was moved to cry, "What shall I do?" the answer of Paul was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

But what is it to "believe in Christ?" It is easy to say, "Come to Christ" and "Accept Christ" and "Believe in Him;" but just here occurs the bewilderment. These are oftentimes mere shop-worn phrases to the unsaved, however simple they may appear to those who have entered on the Christian life.

To believe in Christ is, *first, to credit the historic record of His life.* Once on a time He lived among men, preached, wrought miracles, suffered and died on the accursed tree. So far all will agree; but there is clearly no saving virtue in an intellectual acceptance of an undisputed fact.

It means, *second,* to believe *that Jesus was what He claimed to be.* And His claim is perfectly clear. To the woman of Samaria who sighed for the coming of Messiah He said, "I that speak unto thee am He." No reader of the Scripture could misunderstand His meaning, since the prophecy of the Messiah runs like a golden thread through all its pages from the protevangel, "The Seed of woman shall bruise the serpent's head," to the prediction of Malachi, "The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His beams."

But, more than this, Jesus claimed that as Messiah He was the only-begotten and coequal Son of God. He came forth from God and, after finishing His work, was to return to God and reassume "the glory which He had with the Father before the world was," it was this oft-repeated assertion which so mortally offended the Jews as to occasion His arrest on the charge of blasphemy. He persisted in His claim, and was put to death for "making Himself equal to God." It must be seen, therefore, that no man can be said to believe in Christ who is not prepared to affirm, without demur or qualification, that He was what He claimed to be.

It means, *third,* to believe that Jesus *did what He said He came into the world to do.* And here again there can be no doubt or peradventure. He said "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many." His death was to be the purchase-price of redemption. In the Wilderness He was tempted to turn aside from His great purpose. The adversary led Him to a high place, and with a wave of his hand, directed His thought to the kingdoms of this world, saying, "All

these are mine. I know Thy purpose: Thou art come to win this world by dying for it. Why pay so great a price? I know Thy fear and trembling—for Thou art flesh—in view of the nails, the fever, the dreadful exposure, the long agony. Why pay so great price? I am the prince of this world. One act of homage, and I will abdicate. Fall down and worship me!" Never before or since has there been such a temptation, so specious, so alluring. But Jesus had covenanted to die for sinners. He knew there was no other way of accomplishing salvation for them. He could not be turned aside from the work which He had volunteered to do. Therefore He put away the suggestion with the word, "Get thee behind me, Satan! I cannot be moved! I know the necessity that is laid upon Me. I know that My way to the kingdom is only by the Cross. I am therefore resolved to suffer and die for the deliverance of men."

On a later occasion, on His way to Jerusalem—that memorable journey of which it is written, "He set His face steadfastly" to go toward the Cross—He spoke to His disciples of His death. He had been with them now three years, but had not been able fully to reveal His mission, because they were "not strong enough to bear it." A man with friends, yet friendless, lonely in the possession of His great secret, He had longed to give them His full confidence, but dared not. Now, as they journeyed southward through Cæsarea Philippi, He asked them, "Who do men say that I am?" And they answered, "Some say John the Baptist; others, Elias; others, Jeremias, or one of the Prophets." And He saith, "But who say ye that I am?" Then Peter —brave, impulsive, glorious Peter—witnessed his good

confession: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" The hour had come. His disciples were beginning to know Him. He would give them His full confidence. So as they journeyed on toward Jerusalem He told them all how He had come to redeem the world by bearing its penalty of death; "He began to show them how He must suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed." At that point Peter could hold his peace no longer, but began to rebuke Him, saying, "Be it far from Thee, Lord! To suffer? To die? Nay, to reign in Messianic splendour!" And Jesus turning, said unto him, "Get thee behind Me, Satan!"—the very words with which He had repelled the same suggestion in the wilderness. As He looked on His disciple, He saw not Peter, but Satan—perceived how the adversary had for the moment taken possession, as it were, of this man's brain and conscience and lips. "Get thee behind Me, Satan! I know thee! I recognize thy crafty suggestion; but I am not to be turned aside from My purpose. Get thee behind Me! Thou art an offense unto Me. Thy words are not of divine wisdom, but of human policy. Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men!"

From this we conclude that the vicarious death of Jesus is the vital centre of His Gospel, and that any word which contravenes it is in the nature of a satanic suggestion. It follows that no man can truly believe in Christ without assenting to the fact that the saving power is in His death; as it is written, "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," and, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." He came into the world to die for sinners, that they by His

death might enter into life; He came to take our place before the bar of the offended Law, to be "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, that by His stripes we might be healed;" He came to "bear our sins in His own body on the tree;" and to believe in Christ is to believe that He did what He came to do.

It means, *fourth*—and now we come to the very heart of the matter—to believe that Christ *means precisely what He says.* He says to the sinner, "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." He says, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." He says, "He that believeth in Me *hath* everlasting life." At this point belief means *personal appropriation;* acceptance, immediate, here, now. It is to make an end of doubt and perplexity and all questioning, by closing in with the overtures of divine mercy. It is to lay down one's arms and make an unconditional surrender. It is to take the proffered hand of the Saviour in an everlasting covenant of peace. It is to say, "My Lord, my life, my sacrifice, my Saviour and my all!"

But just here is where many hesitate and fail. They do not "screw their courage to the sticking point." They come up to the line, but do not take the step that crosses it. They do not summon resolution to say, "I will!" They put away the outstretched hand, and so fall short of salvation.

The will must act. The prodigal in the far country will stay there forever unless his resolution cries, "I will arise and go!" The resolution is an appropriating act. It makes Christ mine; it links my soul with His, as the coupler binds the locomotive to the loaded

train. It grasps His outstretched hand; it seals the compact and inspires the song:

'Tis done, the great transaction's done,
I am my Lord's and He is mine!
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine.

High heaven that hears the solemn vow,
That vow renewed shall daily hear;
Till in life's latest hour I bow
And bless in death a bond so dear!

Now this is all. The man who really believes on Christ is saved by that alone. He can never be lost. As Rowland Hill used to say, "We two are so joined, He can't be in glory and leave me behind." But salvation from the penalty of sin is not the whole of salvation; only the beginning of it.

The Sequel

The sequel to "becoming a Christian" is following Christ. "Salvation" is a large word, including growth in character and usefulness and all the high attainments which are included in a genuine Christian life. This is what Paul means when he says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you." Work it *out!* Work your salvation out to its uttermost possibilities! Be a *maximum* Christian; not content with being saved "so as by fire" but craving "an abundant entrance" into the kingdom. All this is accomplished in the close and faithful following of Christ.

This "following" is the sure test and touchstone by which a man determines whether he has really come to Christ and believes in Him. Our "good works" are not meritorious as having any part in our deliverance from condemnation; but they are the acid-test of our faith; and they also determine the quality of the heaven that awaits us. And, in this sense, "they shall in no wise lose their reward." To use a rude figure; a man going to an entertainment gets a ticket of admission, but for his reserved seat he pays something more. "The just shall live by faith;" but the abundance of their life is determined by the product of their faith. Wherefore, he loses much who, while believing in Christ, follows Him afar off.

To follow Christ at the best, means to regard Him as our Priest, our only Priest, whose sacrifice is full and sufficient for us. We forsake all other plans of salvation and trust simply and solely to the merit of His atoning blood.

To follow Christ means to regard Him as our only Prophet, or Teacher. All preachers, ecclesiastical councils, historic creeds and symbols are remanded to a subordinate place. His word is ultimate for us.

To follow Christ means to regard Him as our King. He reigns in us and over us. His love constrains us. His wish is our law. His authority is final. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

And to follow Christ means to do all this in the open. It may be that some who refuse to confess Christ are ultimately saved by Him; but the presumption is immensely against the man who lives that way. "Stand forth into the midst!" "Quit thyself like a man!"

But now we return to iterate and reiterate the proposition that our salvation from sin and spiritual death is by faith in Christ and by that only. Let no side issues enter here to confuse and bewilder us. Let not the simplicity of the proceeding offend us. "He that believeth shall be saved."

That is final and conclusive. Our deliverance is wholly of grace: we do not earn it. "The wages of sin is death: but the gift of God is eternal life."

> Long as I live, I'll still be crying,
> Mercy's free!

And therefore all the glory is unto God: "Of whom are we in Christ Jesus, who is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, that, according as it is written, if any man glory, let him glory in the Lord."

Nevertheless, the benefit of the gift is conditioned on our acceptance of it. The manna lies about our feet "white and plenteous as hoar frost," but it will not save us from famishing unless we gather it up and eat it. The water gushes from the rock, but we shall die of thirst unless we dip it up and drink it. Christ on the Cross saves no man; it is only when Christ is appropriated that He saves us. We must make Him ours. We must grasp His extended hand. Luther said, "The important thing is the possessive pronoun, first person singular." One of the early fathers said, "It is the grip on the blood that saves us." Christ stands waiting—He offers life for the taking. Who will have it? The worst of sinners can make it his very own by saying with all his heart, "I will! I do!"

TWO EDDIES OF ERROR

The owlet Atheism,
Sailing on obscene wings across the moon,
Drops his be-fringéd lids and shuts them close,
And, hooting at the glorious sun in Heaven,
Cries out, "Where is it?"

COLERIDGE

XI

BAALISM, THE DENIAL OF THE FATHER

BAALISM was introduced into Israel about 900 B. C. and soon crowded aside the ancestral faith. Its rites and ceremonies were magnificent. The Court was captivated; and the people followed the fashion. The temple of Jehovah was forsaken; the hill-tops blazed with the sacrificial fires of Baal. The nation bowed the knee and kissed the hand before him.

The ostensible head and defender of the new faith was Ahab, the king. He was, however, a mere figurehead; being with all his bravado, a weak and irresolute man. The power back of Ahab was his Phœnician wife, Jezebel, a strong-minded woman, the Lady Macbeth of her time. And back of her was her distinguished father, Ethbaal, the royal priest of Phœnicia (I Kings xvi: 30, 31).

It would be a great mistake to think of this man Ethbaal as the representative of an inferior civilization. Phœnicia was the most thrifty, progressive and accomplished of the nations. Its people were the Anglo-Saxons of their time. They originated our alphabet. They controlled the commerce of the world. They exchanged commodities with Ophir; they worked the silver mines of far-distant Spain. They easily led the nations in their acquaintance with the industrial and liberal arts.

To-day Phœnicia is a land of imposing ruins; its spendid cities are identified by mounds of broken shafts and marble tesseræ. A recent writer says, "In my journey from Achsid to the fountains of Tyre, I did not see a living face." Yet this was once the centre of the world's civilization. In the closing paragraph of Gibbon's essay on "The Crusades," he says, "A mournful and solitary silence now prevails along the shore which once resounded to the world's debate." Let it be observed, however, that though the scene of "the world's debate" is thus given over to the owl and the bittern, the debate goes on.

Baalism still flourishes in the earth like a green bay tree. It speaks as of old with loud swelling words and denounces the religion of the fathers as old-fashioned and worn out. The standpoint has shifted again and again; but the spirit, principles and methods of Baalism have not budged an inch in the last three thousand years. In his time, Ethbaal was its high priest and authoritative expositor. The name means "favourite or Baal." He was a man of singular power and attainments; he dictated the religious policy not only of Phœnicia but of Jewry as well. It mattered not that the steps of his throne were slippery with his brother's blood; he was, according to his standards, an eminently religious man.

If he had been asked to define and characterize Baalism, he would probably have answered without a moment's hesitation, "*It is the scientific religion of our time;*" a claim which is made nowadays by every form of Freethought or Liberalism as against the religion of the true God. In fact, however, there is no such thing as a "scientific religion." Neither is there any antagonism between science and religion.

Truth is a straight line. A straight line is defined to be "the shortest distance between two points." And truth is the rectilinear road between this world and heaven. On one side and parallel with it runs science, which in its broadest sense embraces all the boundless fields of knowledge, but in its restricted meaning has reference only to that body of truth which is demonstrated by the evidence of the physical senses.

On the other side of the line and parallel with it runs religion; that is, the body of truth which is demonstrated to the sixth or spiritual sense. Now science has no means of investigating the great verities which lie beyond the province of the physical senses; nor can religious truth be demonstrated otherwise than by faith, which is the spiritual sense; as it is written, "Spiritual things are spiritually discerned."

It must be apparent, therefore, since science on the one hand and religion on the other are mutually parallel, as they are parallel with the intermediate line of truth, that they cannot be antagonistic in any way. This is in accordance with the Eleventh Axiom of Euclid, which runs on this wise: "Two straight lines, which intersect one another, cannot be parallel to the same straight line." And Euclid's definition of parallel lines is as follows: "They are such as being in the same plane will never meet though they be produced ever so far." We conclude, therefore, that science and religion, though in the same plane, cannot intersect each other, "though they be produced ever so far."

Of course this does not apply to zigzag and therefore spurious forms of religion; nor to the various forms of quasi-science, which are characterized by Paul as "science falsely so-called." Pseudo-science may

always be recognized by its persistent trespassing upon the preserve of religion, whose tenets can only be apprehended by faith.

It is no derogation to science to say that a scientist is not *ipso facto* a religious man. So long as he addresses himself to the testimony of the physical senses, he is sure to acquire a vast treasure of material truth; but it would be difficult to show how this has any moral influence over him, except as it drives him to the exercise of the sixth sense, by which alone we prove ourselves worthy of our divine birthright. "I thank Thee, Father in heaven," cried Kepler the astronomer, "that I am able to think Thy thoughts after Thee!" It is well indeed for a man to use his physical senses; for as Solomon said, "The wise man's eyes are in his head, while a fool walketh in darkness;" but he who declines to exercise faith as to the things which are "unseen and eternal" is untrue to himself as a man made in the likeness of God.

If further inquiry had been made of Ethbaal as to the character of Baalism, he would have pronounced it preeminently *the Religion of Nature.* Its primal question was, "Whence?" The intuitive syllogism runs on this wise: *First Premise,* Here is the present order of things. *Second Premise,* Out of nothing, nothing comes: *Ergo,* There must have been a First Cause. Now Baal stood for this First Cause, corresponding to such modern terms as Law, Energy and "the Soul of the Universe."

"But," we ask, "what means this great image?" The high priest answers, "This is a mere outward symbol of the Cause. It sets forth Baal as the Sun-god. The sun, as everybody knows, is the source of

universal energy, and as such may reasonably stand for the Supreme One."

"But what is this other image, this image of Ashtaroth?" The high priest answers, "She stands as the spouse or complement of Baal. For, in order to any rational solution of the beginning of things, we must start with generation as the dual principle. Now Baal and Ashtaroth are really only one; a hyphenated or androgynous god; the productive energy of all."

"But what are these other images; Moloch, Dagon, Adonis, Hadad and the rest?" He answers, "These are symbolic representations of the attributes of Baal-Ashtaroth. In our rites and ceremonies we do not really pay worship to these images, but only through them to the Ultimate One."

"And where are your sources of information?" His answer is, "The revelation of Baal is in nature." It does not seem to occur to him, or to the Baalists of our time, that nature speaks a various language. There are indeed "tongues in trees, sermons in stones, books in the running brooks and good in everything." And he is but a poor makeshift of a man who can stand in Chamounix and not hear as Coleridge did the ice-falls and the mountains echoing God. But is this all?

If so, *it is wholly inadequate,* for the following reasons. First, it breaks down at the very outset, by utterly failing to answer its question, "Whence?" It accounts for nothing. It does not find the origin of matter: for were I able to grasp the universe in my palm and there compress it to the infinitesimal dimensions of the primordial germ, the atom would still cry out, "Whence came I?" And it is as difficult to answer the cry of the atom as it is to answer the cry of the

universe. Nor does it account for the origin of life, or of reason, or of man's spiritual nature. A distinguished theologian put the matter justly when he said, "If you pursue this path with the expectation of reaching the First Cause, you will be like one who follows a squirrel-track only to find it running up a tree."

It is inadequate, and unsatisfactory, in the second place, because it depersonalizes God. It is said that Napoleon, after inspecting the naturalistic system of La Place, said, "I see no mention of God here." To which La Place replied, "True; in our philosophy we have no need of Him." The same thought was expressed in other terms by Tyndall in his Belfast address, when he said, "I find in matter the promise and potency of every form of life." It is evident that the so-called god of the freethinkers is, at best, a mere *deus ex machinâ;* called in to account for things. It is a god without eyes to see or ears to hear; without a heart to pity or hands to help the children of men.

Baal has no eyes: here is the denial of Providence. "All things proceed along the calm processes of inviolable law." It took years of famine to teach the children of Israel the folly of that proposition. A mighty stride has been taken in the religious life when a man can say, with all his heart, "Thou God seest me."

Baal has no ears to hear: here is the denial of the efficacy of prayer. "There is no voice nor answer nor any that regardeth." So in many quarters to-day it is affirmed that prayer in no wise affects the Deity, but only rebounds as a "reflex influence" upon the suppliant. This is in obvious contravention of the teaching of Jesus, who said "Ask, and it shall be given unto

you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

Baal has no arm to make bare in our behalf: here is the denial of the supernatural, or of miracles. It is heard on every hand to-day. It leaves no room for the divine exercise of any hypothetical reserve of power. It not only makes God a mere engineer, it makes Him an engineer without the power to lay a finger on the throttle. It makes Him the victim and bondslave of His own machine. Yet history is a long story of divine interposition; the life of Christ is a succession of miracles wrought by the greatest Miracle of all; and His Gospel is merely a definition of IMMANUEL which, being thus interpreted, is "God with us."

For a further statement of this fact we are directed to the Scriptures: "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they which testify of Me." And for a still further and more particular definition of the personal and interposing God we are directed to Christ Himself: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?" And the God thus made manifest is a Father who can be touched with a feeling of the infirmities of His children, who has eyes to see, a heart to pity and an omnipotent arm to help in every time of trouble.

There is an eye that never sleeps
  Beneath the wing of night;
There is an ear that never shuts,
  When sink the beams of light.

There is an arm that never tires,
When human strength gives way;
There is a love that never fails,
When earthly loves decay.

That eye is fixed on seraph throngs;
That arm upholds the sky;
That ear is filled with angels' songs;
That love is throned on high.

But there's a power which man can wield
When mortal aid is vain,
That eye, that arm, that love to reach,
That listening ear to gain.

That power is prayer, which soars on high,
Through Jesus, to the throne,
And moves the hand that moves the world,
To bring salvation down!

The third reason why Baalism is inadequate is because it is practically immoral. Now this is not to say that a Baalist, or freethinker, may not be to all appearance a moral man. It still remains that Baalism is immoral in its tendency since it destroys all sense of responsibility to a personal God.

So it happens that Baal and Ashtaroth were enthroned together. No doubt there were Baalists who did not mingle in the orgies of the groves; but it is a simple historic fact that wherever Baal went there went Ashtaroth with her unclean rites. You find the brazen image, and the frightful grove of impurity is near by.

A few years ago, while I was preaching in one of our western cities, the local propaganda of infidelity fell into a sudden and ignominious collapse through the raiding of its headquarters. The police found the

place filled with palmists, clairvoyants, fortune-tellers, spiritualistic mediums and adventurers of every sort; a considerable number of whom were landed in the common jail.

It is conceded that all freethinkers and infidels are not of this malodorous sort; but when they are respectable, their respectability is not due to their denial of the truth. The incidental benefits of the Gospel, like the showers of heaven, fall even on those who deny God. If its historic influence on Christendom were to be suddenly brought to naught, there is not a thinking man in the world who does not know that the nations included within that charmed circle would return to the barbarism of the nations that still lie in outer darkness. The true religion makes for righteousness. All others involve a practical divorcement of theology and ethics. Baalism sends its sons through sacrificial fires and its daughters through the groves. A denial of the personal God is a denial of human accountability. The only way to live aright is to live, as Milton said, "in the great Taskmaster's eye."

In the fourth place, Baalism is inadequate because it minimizes man. A distinguished scientist has recently said: "I look out on nature, swarming with its multitudinous forms of life; I look on cities packed to suffocation with busy men; I look away to the heavens and, lo, clouds of star-dust; and every atom possibly, a populous world like ours. And what am I? Nothing! Less than nothing! Not so important as a mote flying in a sunbeam!"

Put over against that the words of the shepherd boy who also lifted his eyes to the heavens, as he watched his flocks on the Judean plains, and said: "When I

consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers; the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of Him, or the son of man, that Thou visitest him? For Thou hast made him but little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands: Thou hast put all things under his feet. O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth!"

Or, still better, let us hear the words of Jesus, who, passing through the marketplace of Capernaum and seeing the farmers offering for sale sparrows strung on willow twigs, was moved to say, "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows. If your Father careth for them, will He not much more care for you?"

And finally, Baalism is inadequate because it breaks down at the ultimate and critical point. The supreme function of religion is not to account for the origin of things, however important that may be, but to answer the question, "What shall I do to be saved?"

The sense of sin is as universal as the desire to be delivered from it. But to that question free-thought, or the denial of the Gospel in any form whatsoever, gives no answer. It can only present the Law of Consequences in its implacable rigidity: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." If I ask, "What shall I do about the dark record of the past?" it can only say, "Let the dead past bury its dead; there is nothing to be done about it."

But here comes Christ with His Gospel. He speaks: "He that believeth shall be saved; the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sin!" We follow Him to Olivet and listen to the Sermon on the Mount, which is by universal consent a matchless presentation of spiritual truth. We follow Him to the Porches of Bethesda where He illustrates His doctrine in the healing of the lame and withered and blind. We follow Him on His itineraries among the villages and our hearts repeat the monograph of His wonderful life, "He went about doing good." We follow on until we come to Calvary: they have nailed Him to the accursed tree and the multitudes stand beholding with cold eyes. He is being wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, that we may be healed by His stripes. He is being made a sin-offering for us.

And, gazing on that Tragedy, we are perforce carried back through the centuries to the Lord's controversy on Carmel. This is, indeed, "the world's debate." Here is a stupendous battle of the gods. The prophet of Jehovah stands by His lonely altar saying, "Let a bullock be placed here; and, ye four hundred priests of Baal, lay a bullock on each of your altars; and call ye upon the name of Baal and I will call upon the name of Jehovah; and the god that answereth by fire, let him be God!" It is done: they begin to cry, "O Baal, hear us!" but there is no answer. The sun passes the zenith and still they cry, "O Baal, hear us!" and there is no voice nor answer nor any that regardeth. At evening the prophet calmly lifts his voice in prayer: "O God, let it be known this day in Israel that Thou art God!" And, lo, yonder it falls, like a burning fleece from heaven. It consumes the sacrifice;

and the people are crying, "The Lord, He is the God!"

All this was but a foregleam of the great sacrifice on Calvary. There indeed the Lord answered by fire; and He has been answering by fire all along the centuries to this day. This is the philosophy of history. The light of the Sacrifice which was wrought for us men and our salvation has been cast through all the subsequent ages; and the world has grown brighter and brighter with each succeeding day. Thus history is the irrefutable logic of Jehovah. The Lord He is the God!

XII

ANTICHRIST, THE DENIAL OF THE SON

THE brief Epistles of John are worthy of special consideration for several reasons. One is that they were written by a centenarian. It is meet and proper, as Elihu the Buzite said, that "days should speak and the multitude of years teach wisdom." Truths falling from the lips of the aged are like the declining sun, which grows broader and more imposing as it sinks toward the western sea.

It should be observed also that the writer of these Epistles was deeply informed as to religious things. He had been educated in the school of experience, whose curriculum is more effective than that of any university course. His historic title was "Theologos;" not so much on account of his general theological proficiency as for the emphasis he placed on the doctrine of the *Logos* as *Theos,* or Christ as God. It was he who said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God; and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

The reader of John's Epistles should bear in mind, also, that he was distinctively "the Beloved Disciple" and as such was received into the innermost confidence of his Lord. He lay upon Jesus' bosom at the sacramental feast and was, probably, as well qualified as any mortal man could be to interpret "the mind that was in Christ Jesus."

It should, furthermore, be remembered that John was "the Apostle of Love." Love was his constant theme. All are familiar with the tradition that, in his declining years, when no longer able to preach from his Ephesian pulpit, he would stretch forth tremulous hands and say, "Little children, love one another." The law of kindness was in his heart. If, therefore, we find him speaking in severe terms of evil doers or false teachers, it is solely on account of his solicitude for the welfare of his fellow men.

The term "Antichrist" was originated by John. Not that others of the sacred writers did not speak at large concerning the thing which it designated, but he coined the word; and its suggestions are such as to warrant our devout and careful consideration. He refers to it in four passages, as follows: "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that Antichrist shall come, even now there are many Antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (I John ii: 18);—"Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son" (I John ii: 22);—"And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh,* is not of God: and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world" (I John iv: 3);—"For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an Antichrist" (II John 7).

I. We have here, at the outset, a clear definition of

* This passage must, obviously, be interpreted in the light of John's Gospel, i: 1-5.

Antichrist; it is a denial of the fact that the only-begotten Son of God left the glory which He had with the Father before the world was, assumed our flesh and dwelt among us.

It appears from the foregoing Scripture that Antichrist is both a principle and a person. As a principle or doctrine it was formulated in what was historically known as the Gnostic heresy, which denied the divinity of Christ. This denial was made in many ways; but it was always an antithesis of the proposition that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." Gnosticism, as such, died about 300 A. D.; but it survived under other names, such as Arianism and Sabellianism; and as Unitarianism it still exists.

The personal advocate of this heresy in the time of John was Cerinthus, who affirmed that Jesus was a mere man; but that, at His baptism, an Æon from God descended through the open heavens upon Him, enduing Him with divine attributes which He exercised until His crucifixion, when the Æon was again withdrawn at His cry, "My God, my God! Why hast Thou forsaken Me!" The personal reference, "He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son;" was probably directed at this man: but, as the Apostle says, "There are many Antichrists," and again, "Whosoever confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, the same is a deceiver and an Antichrist." In the opinion of the Westminster Assembly of divines the Pope was an Antichrist; this was true only so far as the Pope at that time practically denied the divine preeminence of Jesus by putting himself in Christ's place as a mediator and announcing himself as the Vicar of God. It is true, in like measure, of any

teacher whomsoever who denies that Jesus Christ is "very God of very God."

II. The denial of the divinity of Christ, as thus indicated, is characterized by the apostle in no uncertain terms. He repeatedly speaks of it as the great "lie," and of its advocate as "a deceiver and a liar;" as where he asks "Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?"

These are strange epithets to fall from the lips of "the Apostle of Love." But this man was no euphemist, no mincer of words. He meant what he said and said what he meant. And in the present case there was abundant reason for plain speaking; for the teacher who denied the divinity of Christ struck at the living centre of Christianity. In this denial was involved an inevitable denial of every essential fact of Christianity; particularly the Incarnation, the Efficacy of the Atonement, and the Miracle of the Resurrection as a divine seal put upon the person, character and work of the only-begotten Son.

As a devout lover of the truth, it therefore devolved upon John to denounce this heresy in unmistakable words. In his letter to the Elect Lady and her Children he admonishes her to cherish this doctrine of Christ, at all hazards, saying, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. If there come any unto you that bringeth not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds."

III. One of the important conclusions from this teaching of John is the importance of keeping ourselves in the orbit of truth.

The doctrines of Christianity are as arcs of a great circle of which Christ is the centre. To leave the circumference at any point involves the danger of swinging off like a tangent into infinity. There is a singular pertinence in Jude's reference to false teachers as "wandering stars." It is one of the differentiating facts of our religion that its doctrines admit of systemization, a fact which cannot be asserted of any other. No coherent or logical system of doctrine has been formulated for Islam, Buddhism, Brahmanism or any of the false religions. It is obvious, therefore, that our safety as believers lies in a consistent acceptance of every Christian truth as held in place by the attraction of Christ Himself, as centre of all.

IV. It devolves on a believer, also, to observe a right attitude toward all forms of unbelief, but particularly toward this denial of Christ.

The line is clearly drawn along the statement of this doctrine of the Godhood of Jesus, and it divides between those who are justly entitled to call themselves Christians and those who are not. This would go without the saying, were it not that many call themselves by the name of Christ who openly avow the heresy which John characterizes as the great "lie." It may have been more important in the infancy of the Church to avoid the fellowship of such deniers of Christ than at present; but the time will never come when a home like that of the Elect Lady can safely harbour a teacher who makes it his business, as did the Gnostics, to deny that Jesus was what He claimed to be. "For what communion hath light with darkness? Or what concord hath Christ with Belial?" (II Cor. vi: 16).

This is not to say that we are prohibited from

mingling on terms of common affection with unbelievers; but the line dividing us is never to be obscured, and our faith is never to be confused or compromised with their denial of it. They are oftentimes bound to us by the closest and tenderest ties of kinship; not infrequently we are associated with them in the secular affairs of life; nevertheless we are divided from them by a gulf which can only be bridged by their conversion to the truth. Meanwhile it is our duty to love them sincerely and pray without ceasing that they may be brought to a knowledge of Christ as the only Saviour from sin.

I am aware that this will be regarded as intolerance; but observe, it is not my intolerance; since our present task is merely, but with absolute frankness, to interpret the teaching of the Scriptures. Let us inquire, however, what is meant by "tolerance." Is it to say, "For forms of faith let canting bigots fight; his faith cannot be wrong whose life is right;" when we are divinely taught that loyalty to truth is the only basis of a holy life? Two things which are so manifestly opposite as the assertion and denial of Christ's divinity, cannot both be true. It must be apparent, therefore, that, here as elsewhere, *tolerance of error is intolerance of truth.* Such tolerance may arise from either ignorance or indifference; but in either case it is disloyalty to truth; and in the case under consideration it is disloyalty to the living Source and Centre of truth.

V. It should be observed, however, that while John presents, in most vivid terms, the danger of being led away by Antichrist, he strikes no minor chord of discouragement.

On the contrary, he gives the impression of an abso-

lute faith in the ultimate triumph of Christ over all. We hear it affirmed that the Godhood of Jesus is now more frequently and speciously denied than ever before; which might be expected from the rapid and not always careful multiplication of Church members in recent years. But there is no occasion for borrowing trouble.

> Truth crushed to earth shall rise again.
> The eternal years of God are hers;
> But Error, wounded, writhes with pain,
> And dies among his worshippers.

The last error to die will be the denial of Christ: it will continue until the last stubborn knee shall bend in homage before Him at the rising of the millennial sun.

In this and other heresies of our time there is nothing new. The terminology may vary, but the fact is precisely as John declared it. The Prince of This World is no less reluctant now than ever to surrender his dominion over the hearts of men. Is it not written, "The evil spirit tare him before it came out of him?" But, however violent these manifestations of error, the Church is in no danger; since it is eternally founded on the Godhood of Christ. This is the good confession of Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," whereof Christ said, "On this rock will I build my Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

Nor is the individual Christian in any danger; for, as John said, "The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him" (I John ii: 27).

The anointing or chrism here referred to is that of the Holy Spirit, of whom Christ said, "He shall lead you into all truth." In like manner He said, "I am the good Shepherd and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. They know My voice; and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers" (John x: 5). It is only those who live on the outermost edge of loyalty to Christ who are in danger of being mortally "deceived" by those who deny Him.

VI. In order that there may be no possibility of doubt in respect to this matter, the apostle gives the believer a touchstone, by which he may be able to determine between truth and error: "Beloved, believe not every spirit; but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false teachers are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God; and this is that spirit of Antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come" (I John iv: 1-3).

To be right in our relations with Christ is, therefore, to be safe against all error and openhearted toward all truth. Our loyalty to Him is like the chi-rho, or cabalistic monogram of Christ which was worn as a protective amulet by the Christians of the olden time.

VII. We conclude, then, that our place of absolute security is at Jesus' feet.

Why not? Have we not professed to receive Him as Prophet, Priest and King? In that posture we hear the doctrine of His Person from His own lips: He is the only-begotten of the Father, who came forth from

heaven and assumed our flesh, that He might be able to suffer in our behalf and to suffer sufficiently for all the children of men. We shall hear Him, furthermore, refer us to the teaching of His apostles as commissioned to declare truth under the influence of His Spirit. He so distinctly places the seal of authenticity and divine authority upon their Scripture, that we are left no alternative but to receive their words precisely as we receive His; as He said, "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me." Not only so; we hear Him putting His divine sanction and imprimatur on the whole body of Scripture, saying, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life and these are they which testify of Me." We are bound, therefore, as we are loyal to our Lord and Master, to accept these Scriptures without demur or hesitation, as the Word of God.

But what becomes of progress? Are we not to be "progressive Christians?" Surely. We are to move on with the revolution of the years. Let it be understood, however, that progress is not cometary but planetary and subservient to law. The comets whizz through space, like the freethinkers that they are, defiant of control and heedless of destination; while the planets revolve in their orbits, obeying the force that holds them ever to the central orb.

One of the well-worn proverbs of our time is, "The heretics of yesterday are the believers of to-day." There is not a particle of truth in it. Men's opinions have oftentimes been overturned by the logic of events, but the things that were essentially true in the beginning are equally true to-day. The Gnostic of the second century was no more heretical in his views than is

the Unitarian of our time. The truth has not swerved an hair's breadth in the progress of the ages. Orthodoxy, as outlined by the great verities, is just what it was at the beginning of the Christian Era. Paul was evangelical, Simon Magus was a heretic: John was orthodox; Cerinthus was an unbeliever; the denial of the fundamental facts of Christianity comes and goes with an ever-changing terminology; but the truth is immutable, "and the thing that hath been shall be."

The progressive Christian is one who sits at his Master's feet asking in humble reverence, "Lord, what sayest Thou?" and, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" and who then proceeds to model his faith and life upon the instructions of his Lord, ever glad and eager to say, "The love of Christ constraineth me."

THE ENEMY

There's such divinity doth hedge a king,
That treason can but peep to what it would.

HAMLET

XIII

THE TROJAN HORSE

AN infidel, strictly speaking, is an apostate; but by long usage the word has come to designate one who wilfully opposes truth. The truth is from God. The original infidel was Satan who addressed our first parents on this wise, "Yea, hath God said?" This is the open question of the centuries, "Has God spoken? Has He revealed Himself to men?"

The contention is that God has thus revealed Himself in the Scriptures as His Written Word and in Jesus Christ as His Incarnate Word, the two complementing each other and constituting the binomial and complete Word of God.

To oppose that proposition is the special function of the infidel. His plan of procedure is either by open assault or strategy. Experience has shown the former to be the more admirable but less effective method; wherefore it is little used in these days.

The old-time infidel was oftentimes a man of courage, who hung his banners on the outer walls, like Macbeth, crying, "Blow wind! Come wrack! At least we'll die with harness on our back." There was Celsus, back in the second century, who in his "True Discourse" hurled all the thunderbolts that the Greek Philosophy had ever forged against the truth; and Julian the Apostate who assailed Christ as an impostor

and His followers as "Galileans;" and multitudes of others whose minds, however warped, were cast in a heroic mould. And there were also the titans of the eighteenth century; Hume and Gibbon, the courtly Chesterfield, Thomas Paine with his "unchained tiger," the grandiloquent Rousseau, Mirabeau, Voltaire with his frightful cry, "Ecrasez l'Infame!" and all the fathers of the Reign of Terror. What mattered it that the guillotine gaped for victims, that the gutters ran red? On with the dance of death! We bow at the shrine of Reason! There is no God!

But where are those admirable infidels now? Alas, all gone. In England, Bradlaugh was the last of the Old Guard. In America, when Robert Ingersoll "fell down," as Shakespeare said anent the death of Cæsar, "they all fell down." No more are left to cry, "Let us break his bands asunder and cast away his cords from us!"

The policy of open attack has given way to strategy. The open attack did not work. When the enemy came in like a flood the Lord lifted up His banner. Rant and execrate as they would, the Church grew and prospered. The gates of hell could not prevail against it. In the last half century of blatant infidelity the numerical increase of the Church was larger than in the eighteen hundred years before it.

Hence the ominous silence that prevails in our time. The troops of Ulysses are no longer hurled in vain assault against the walls of Troy; the wooden horse has been dragged into the citadel, and the ambushed army awaits the issue. The denial of truth is no longer with a bold defiance but with a rising inflection, "Yea hath God said?" On every hand are heard

denials, more or less outspoken, of the supernatural factor in both the written and the incarnate Word of God.

This is what Jesus foretold: "Many false prophets shall arise and shall deceive many;" and again, "Beware of false prophets which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves!" The teaching of the apostles abounds in like admonitions, as where Peter says, "There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies; and many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." This being so, it is the manifest duty of all Christians to be on their guard, and of all Christ's ministers to be faithful in exposing those who thus subtly and treacherously oppose the truth. This is not intolerance, else Christ and His apostles would not have led the way. It cannot offend the faithful; since he who takes offense by putting on the accusation, pleads guilty *ipso facto* by confessing that it fits him.

The false prophet, as Jesus says, may be "known by his fruits;" not merely by his moral misdemeanors but by his way of putting things. The old-time infidel would have frankly thrown down his gauntlet on this wise, "The Bible is a fraud and Jesus an impostor." Not so our strategist: he commands a large vocabulary of equivocal words and phrases. One touchstone, however, will always betray him. He denies that God has truthfully revealed Himself either in the Scriptures, or by logical sequence in Christ.

I. He will tell you that he "believes the Bible;" but, pursuing the subject further, you discover that he is juggling with words. When he says "The Bible

is true," he means only that it is occasionally or frequently so. When he calls it the "Word of God" he means only that it is one of many Words of God. When he talks about "inspiration" he means simply an inspiration common to the world's literature. And if he ascribes "divinity" to Christ, it is only the divinity which he would grant to all who were created in the image of God. If words were coins such men would be liable to arrest for counterfeiting: and perhaps they are thus liable in that Appellate Court where the term honesty is not restricted to commercial transactions but has to do with the secret imaginations of the hearts of men.

II. And then, if you insist on the veracity of the Scriptures, this clever adversary will inquire, with a lifting of his eyebrows, if your religion is "the religion of a Book?" to which you may safely answer "Why not?" It is the religion of the Bible as the ultimate and only authority concerning Christ and His Gospel. Then ask him where he finds his standard of authority. If he rejects the Book which is the only accepted authority as to Christ, his only alternatives are to take either an infallible Church or an infallible *ego*. Out of this dilemma no escape is possible, except into the wilderness of agnosticism: "I know not."

III. Then he will probably ask why you lay such emphasis on "the question, whether Moses wrote the Pentateuch or not?" And that will disclose his utter disingenuousness: for nobody knows better than he that the question is not, "Who wrote the Scriptures?" but "Are they true, and wholly true, as coming from God?" The question is not as to the amanuensis who held the pen, but as to the Divine Mind that moved it.

It is indeed of slight moment who wrote the Pentateuch or Isaiah, or any other portion of the Scriptures; except so far as their authorship is definitely stated in the book itself; but it is of vital importance to know whether the claim which the Bible makes for itself is true or not, to wit, that it was "inspired" (literally, God-breathed), and transmitted to us through holy men who "wrote as they were moved by the Spirit of God."

IV. Next, this false prophet will ask "what difference a few unimportant mistakes can make with the broad doctrinal and ethical teachings of Scripture?" There again he is disingenuous. In fact he does not limit himself to "a few unimportant mistakes;" he really holds that Genesis is a compilation of myths and legends; Deuteronomy, a wholesale forgery; the prophesies of no significant value, and the Book itself a mingled tissue of truth and error. It is not a question of infinitesimals but of wholesale essentials. It is not a question of "specks in the marble of the Parthenon," but whether there ever was a Parthenon, and if so, whether it was really built of marble or only of wood, hay and stubble. The Bible as interpreted by these teachers is not "the best of books;" nay, so far from that, if one hundred of the most reliable volumes of current literature were placed beside it, the critics themselves being the judges, the Bible would be the least trustworthy of them all.

V. You may then expect this ingenious disputant to inquire with an air of amazement, whether you "really believe there are no mistakes in the Bible?" To which you may safely answer, "No, there are no mistakes in the Bible: though there are some, such as might naturally be expected in the process of transmission and

translation, in the King James version, and in other versions of it." Whereupon he will be pretty certain to say, "Oh, you mean you believe in the inerrancy of the Original Autograph? Did you ever see it? And what have we to do with it?" Now suppose you meet him with a similar question as to the Incarnate Word: "Did you ever see Christ? Did any living person ever see Him? Did you ever hear anybody say that he had ever seen Him? Why then do you believe in Christ at all?"

The fact is that, at this point, there is singular parallel between Christ and the Scriptures: (1) They are both alike called The Word of God. (2) They are both theanthropic; that is, the Divine and human are inextricably blended in their fabric; yet not so as to prevent their absolute truth and faultlessness. (3) Both Originals have vanished from sight; and are transmitted through succeeding ages only through the lives and labours of fallible men. Nevertheless, we believe in the unseen Christ and thus believing "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." And for a like reason we believe in the Original Autograph of the Scriptures as it left the pens of those holy men who wrote as they were moved by the Spirit of God. (4) Despite all errors in the transmission of the two Words, written and incarnate, they are alike in such substantial perfection as to be "profitable unto every good work," and wholly effective in guiding and saving men.

VI. But, says the controversialist, "What difference does it make whether the historical and scientific parts of Scripture are true or not, so long as its doctrinal and ethical propositions are correct? Is not its purpose to save men?" The answer is plain; to say

that the only purpose of the Scriptures is salvation is pure assumption. They were intended to be "profitable in all things, so that a man may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work." And if they are not veracious in respect to science and history, what ground have we for committing ourselves to their spiritual guidance? *Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus.* If the veracity of your witness is successfully impugned the only thing for him to do is to step out of the witness-box. A minister of the gospel whose word is discredited in secular affairs is not likely to pass unchallenged as a spiritual counsellor. The Bible is not truthworthy any way unless it is trustworthy every way.

VII. "But," continues our specious opponent, "this is a question for experts. The points at issue are such as can only be determined by the profoundest scholarship. Would you set yourself against all progress and erudition? These men are now engaged in their investigations; and it behooves the unlearned to patiently await their conclusions." Is there no erudition except the microscopic skill to split a hair, or analyze a fly-speck on the margin? Or is there a broader, deeper, higher scholarship, gotten in the secret place with God? But suppose we take these men at their word and concede that wisdom will die with them, what are "the unshod people" to do meanwhile, whose souls are agonizing for a solution of the problems of eternal life? Must they hold in abeyance the great question, "What shall I do to be saved?" And how long are they to keep themselves thus in suspense, like Mohammed's coffin, betwixt heaven and earth? Have not experts been discussing these questions since

the foundation of the world? No, gentlemen, the Bible is the Book of the People, as its salvation is for all sorts and conditions of men. "Where are the wise? Where are the disputers of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of men?" Specialists have their place; let them keep it. Our Lord's promise of the Holy Ghost is not to Doctors of Divinity and Theological Professors only, but to all His disciples, "He shall lead you into all truth." The Bible is removed by that promise from the exclusive province of expert scholarship and placed within the universal ken. Let those who are open and avowed enemies of the Word pour on their destructive acids and kindle their hostile fires; but meanwhile it behooves such as are bound by covenant vows to vindicate their loyalty to the Scriptures by defending them. And the people are the jury in this case, as they were in the Lord's controversy on Mount Carmel; as between Elijah and the priests of Baal, their verdict being, "The Lord He is the God!"

VIII. "But you are mistaken," says our friend the enemy, "in asserting that our purpose is destructive. It may be that incidentally the faith of some has been shaken; but, whatever may have occurred in the past, while we were clearing away the debris, we are now engaged in constructive work." So much the worse. You are right in your confession thus far; you have found a lot of lame people walking with crutches and, having persuaded them to throw away their Bibles, it is high time that you should furnish some other support for their uncertain steps. But what do you propose? A New Bible? Aye, you tell us that, under the clear blaze of your erudition, the Bible has come

to be "a new Book." It is indeed a new book; full of errors on all points within the cognizance of the senses yet heralded by you as a trustworthy guide in matters beyond sight! The thinking world laughs. Is this the edifice which you have been so laboriously constructing? Is this your "refuge from the storm and shadow from the heat?" A Bible without ground of confidence? A religion without the supernatural? A Gospel without oracles? A Christianity without Christ? A Salvation without blood?

IX. "Nay, but we do not deny Christ," they say; "On the contrary we insist on loyalty to Christ. Our whole system is Christocentric. Back to Christ!" What Christ? The Christ of the Bible which you renounce? The Christ who affixed His authoritative seal to the "fables" of the Flood, of Lot's wife, of Jonah in the whale's belly? The Christ who called the Scriptures "truth" and never breathed a word or syllable against their absolute inerrancy? The Christ who said "Search the Scriptures (not for the purpose of disproving them but) because in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they which testify of Me?" Or, in your process of "construction" are you giving the world a new Christ, too? One of your leaders recently said, from his theological chair, "The time has come for a restatement of the doctrine of Christ." *Timeo Danaos, dona ferentes.* It is not enough, under the circumstances, for you to say that you believe in Christ.

> A daw's not counted a religious bird
> Because it keeps a-cawing from a steeple.

It is not enough for you to talk about a Christocentric

system. The word "Christocentric" has a mellifluous sound, but if it be employed to cover a rejection of Christ's doctrine as to inspiration or anything else it serves Him ill. We may be sure He Himself would be the first to repudiate a Bibleless Gospel no matter what sweet adjective you may attach to it.

X. But we are privately informed by certain of these men that the truths of the New Theology are esoteric; and that those who entertain them are not accustomed to declare them on the house-tops. Worse and worse! There are no "mysteries" in our religion. "An highway shall be there and a way; and the wayfaring man though a fool shall not err therein." Did not the Master say, "Except ye become as a little child, ye shall in no wise see the kingdom of God?" The man "in holy orders" who confidentially avows opinions which he dare not preach in the great congregation is false to his obligation to declare the truth as he understands it. More than that, he is a coward. If he would vindicate his manhood, not to say his Christianity, let him stand forth in the open and, whether men will hear or forbear, fearless of consequences and indifferent to tenure of office, let him declare the truth as the God whom he professes to serve has given him to understand it.

We are sadly in need of two classes of men in these days. On the one hand we want infidels, outspoken infidels, who will take their places in the open and lift up their banners against Zion. Where are the atheists who deny God? Where are the brave scoffers who defied Jehovah and ran headlong on the bosses of his shield? Where is Goliath with his spear like a weaver's beam? Where are the fierce wolves of the wilderness?

Alas, these days of ours are the degenerate days of wolves clad in wool and mingling with the sheep, of Doeg the Edomite skulking behind the altar, of Shimei in ambush throwing stones at the King.

And, on the other hand we want believers; stalwart believers, who know the truth and knowing dare maintain. There is no room for Epicenes, "middle-of-the-road" men, Redwalds with the motto "*In utramque paratus,*" professing to stand on neutral ground while sympathetically and practically opposing themselves to Christ and His Gospel. Everywhere the call is for men to follow Him; men of conviction, and of courage to speak forth the last atom of their conviction; men who do not mince nor mouthe nor mumble in their utterance, but by faith proclaim, "These things we know!" men who to the full measure of their light shine forth and withhold not aught of the whole counsel of God.

XIV

ATTACKING THE CITADEL

IS it true that Christianity stands or falls on the doctrine of the Resurrection of Christ? So Paul affirms (I Cor. xv: 12-19). It would appear to be a dangerous admission, and certainly it is in violation of a maxim prevalent in commercial life; to wit, "It is unwise to carry all your eggs in one basket."

The words of Paul are in the nature of a suggestion as to tactics. Suppose the enemy were to take advantage of it? Paul knew the far-reaching possibilities of his proposition and was willing to abide the issue. If the doctrine of the Resurrection goes, he says, all goes.

And Christ Himself made the same intimation: when the Jews required of Him a sign, he answered, "I will give you no sign but the sign of the Prophet Jonas; three days in the belly of hell, and then life and immortality brought to light." And so the Chief Priests and Pharisees understood it; for they came to Pilate saying, "We remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure lest His disciples come by night and steal Him away, and say unto the people, 'He is risen from the dead.'" They knew that His triumph over death would present an irrefutable argument in favour of His utmost claims. And Pilate consented to their de-

mand, saying, "Ye have your watch; go your way; make it as sure as you can."

So it appears that if the Resurrection of Christ be established, His Gospel is secure; otherwise He is branded as an impostor, and Christianity is a vain and empty thing.

If these things are so, what an immense amount of energy is wasted by the enemy in assailing the Gospel at other points! Plainly, the campaign is being mismanaged. Paul's tactical suggestion is a wise one. Why should they attack the Church or the Bible or the Incarnation or the Atonement or any other point in the defenses? Here is the citadel. So long as that holds out the Gospel stands. Let that be reduced and everything is lost. If dynamite can be placed under the foundations of the citadel and successfully exploded we may as well surrender; our cause is blown into the air.

This is the point of Paul's proposition in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians. As an old-time enemy of the Gospel he knew precisely what he was saying and how valuable his suggestion might be to the enemies of Christ. Yet he was willing to risk the consequences, because he knew to a certainty what the result would be.

His first statement, is If you can show that Christ did not rise from the dead, "*then is our preaching vain.*" Why so? What was Paul preaching and what have men been preaching from then until now? Here is the substance and sum total of it: Christ is our Prophet, our Priest and our King.

As our Prophet, or authoritative Teacher, He instructs in spiritual things; and His authority rests on

His credentials from God. To be sure, His precepts stand upon their own merit, in any case; but the resurrection miracle creates an antecedent presumption in their favour, without which He can speak only as Plato spoke or Epictetus or Sakya-muni or Confucius or any other wise man. An ounce of gold dust has as much intrinsic value as a gold eagle, but it does not pass current among men until it receives "the image and superscription of the king." If the Resurrection of Christ be true, then the authority of a "Thus saith the Lord" rests on all His words: while without it He is simply one of many teachers among men.

We preach, also, that Christ is our Priest.

In ministering at the altar in our behalf He supersedes all other priests; and His Atonement supplants all other sacrifices, being made "once for all." Now this is not merely the fundamental fact of our preaching, it is the very heart of the believers' faith. It is immensely important, therefore, that it should be clearly and satisfactorily verified; and this verification is found in His Resurrection, and there only. This miracle bears to the sacerdotal work of Jesus the same relation precisely which the budding of Aaron's rod bore to his priesthood; that is, it certifies that His sacrifice is authorized of God and approved by Him. If His Resurrection were to be discredited, the death of Jesus would still remain one of the most pathetic tragedies in history: or, to put it in Renan's words, "His legend must call forth tears without end and His sufferings melt the noblest heart." But Renan denied the Divinity of Jesus, and therefore held that His death had nothing more to do with our salvation than that of any other good man. The illustrated

edition of his *Vie de Jesus* closed with the word "Fin," under which was a rude woodcut of the Crucifixion representing a man of the peasant class, his head sunk upon his breast in an attitude of utter, agonizing despair. A sight, indeed, to move all noblest hearts, yet fitly accompanied by the word "fin;" since, so far as his claims to Messianic and Salvatory power were concerned, for him death ended all.

And we preach also, that Christ is "King over all and blessed forever."

At the close of His redemptive work He returned to heaven to reassume the glory which He had with the Father before the world was; where from His high throne He rules by the power of His Spirit all nations and the children of men. But if it can be shown that death held and still holds dominion over Him, then it is scarcely necessary to say that our ascription of royalty vanishes into thin air. It is related of Saladin, the historic leader of the great campaigns of Islam, that in his last illness he required of his attendants that, instead of hanging the imperial standards at the gate of the palace as was customary when a royal death occurred, they should display his shroud, with the proclamation, "Death hath conquered Saladin the conqueror of the East!" A like confession must be made as to Jesus Christ if He did not issue from the sepulchre on the third day. Let the shroud take the place of the royal standards, since the King of Terrors has triumphed over Him.

The saving virtue of the Gospel, which is the comprehensive summary of our preaching, lies in the fact that Jesus is thus our Prophet, Priest and King: as Prophet, setting forth His divine claim to infallibility

in the province of truth; as Priest, making atonement for our sins; and as King, asserting His ability "to save unto the uttermost all that will come unto Him." But if the appointed sign of His preminence as Prophet, Priest and King has failed, then our preaching is vain and the confidence of those who have believed it is betrayed, since, as Paul says, they "are yet in their sins."

So we come to the second result which, as Paul says, must follow the disproving of the Resurrection of Christ, namely, "*Your faith also is vain.*" Your faith in what? There are three things which Christians are expected to believe with all their hearts; and these constitute the essential substance of their faith.

They are expected to believe that Jesus, as the long-looked-for Messiah, came into the world to save sinners.

He claimed to be that Messiah, "whom kings and prophets longed to see and died without the sight." To the woman of Samaria who expressed a longing to see the Messiah He said, "I that speak unto thee am He." As the Messiah He claimed to be coequal with the Father, being His only-begotten and well-beloved Son: saying "I and My Father are one." And the demonstration of the verity of His claim lies in His Resurrection; as it is written, "He showed Himself to be the Son of God with power by His Resurrection from the dead." This had been prophetically set forth as the sign of His Messiahship; as where it is written, "I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee:" and again, "For Thou wilt not leave My soul in the grave, neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption" (Ps. xvi: 10).

It is apparent, therefore, that the confidence of believers in Him is wholly misplaced if He did not rise from the dead.

They are required to believe, also, that though He ascended into the heavens He is still really and personally with them.

His promise is, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Now this means immeasurably more than that His memory is an abiding memory, or that His influence survives Him. Any man may say, as Sheridan did when dying, "I am called away to meet an imperative engagement, but my character will stay behind me:" but Christ promises more, and His people expect more of Him. He is "an ever-present help in time of trouble:" a present Saviour; a present Comforter in the stress of temptation, under the heat and burden of the day, and in the gathering twilight of "the hour that trieth the soul of a man." But this, also, is a delusion, a mere dream, a comfortable hallucination, if the story of Joseph's garden be resolved into a myth. For then He suffered the common doom of humankind, His body returning to the earth as it was and His Spirit to God who gave it; naught remains but a handful of dust scattered to the winds.

And, furthermore, believers are instructed to look for His glorious reappearing.

"Maranatha!" they say: "He cometh again!" And His return is to be marked by the reunion of saints: as Paul writes to the Christians of Thessalonica, "I would not have ye to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe

that Jesus died and rose again, even so also them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

> As for thy friends, they are not lost;
> The several vessels of thy fleet,
> Though sundered far, by tempest tossed,
> Shall safely in the harbour meet.

But if Christ be not risen, this also is a dream. He shall not "so come as ye have seen Him go into heaven;" nor is there any ground for believing in the glad day of "knitting severed friendships up."

The conclusion of Paul, therefore, "Then are we of all men most miserable," is an inevitable sequence. We are miserable in our rude awaking from a most delightful dream. We thought He came to save us: we felt ourselves supported amid the cares and burdens of life by His abiding presence: we fondly looked for His return and the return of our beloved with Him. But, farewell! farewell! "If Christ be not risen your faith is vain."

The third conclusion of Paul, in case the doctrine of the Resurrection should be refuted, is that we "*are found false witnesses of God,* because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ." The "we" in this case includes all followers of Christ, since all are officially appointed and commissioned to be witnesses for Him.

The masterstroke of tactical opposition is here pointed out; impeach the witnesses! If this can be accomplished, the case, which carries with it the integrity of the entire Christian religion, is summarily thrown out of court.

One of the witnesses indicated is Paul himself, who

says, "Last of all He was seen of me also, as one born out of due season." The reference was to his conversion on the Damascus highway, when he heard the Voice saying, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest:" and straightway he answered, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" It has been affirmed that this was merely a spiritual communication and not a personal appearance at all: but, obviously, nothing is gained by giving this turn to the argument, since it involves such a concession of the supernatural as would leave the difficulty more unsolved than ever.

And it would still be necessary to impugn the testimony of Mary Magdalene and the other women; of Peter and the two men of Emmaus; of the seven apostles who affirmed that they saw Jesus in the upper room; of the eleven, who saw Him afterwards on the sea shore and again upon the mountain; of James, who held a solitary interview with Him; and of the "more than five hundred brethren" of whom Paul wrote A. D. 59, "the greater part remain unto this present;" and also of that considerable company who saw Him on the day of His Ascension. It is indeed a trifle late to endeavour to reach and cross-question these witnesses, whose testimony seems not to have been doubted, certainly not refuted, while they were living and able to speak for themselves. And the cumulative evidence which they gave has appeared to judicial minds, like Whately and Blackstone, to be so massive as to forbid all serious effort to invalidate it.

And how about the great cloud of witnesses who, all along the centuries, have testified, out of the depths of their religious experience, that He who was dead liveth and is alive forever more, and that they have held

and are ever holding communion with Him? There are some hundreds of millions of people to-day who bear such testimony. And it can be said without fear of contradiction, and speaking within bounds, that among them are a vast number of upright, liberally educated and thoughtful men. The only possibility of controverting this evidence is to subject it to what is called the "scientific test;" that is, to deny the reality of everything that lies outside the circumscription of the physical senses. It is true that spiritual things are to be apprehended only by faith; and if faith be ruled out, all things supernatural vanish, as life itself disappears when the surgeon with his scalpel pursues it. If the brain is merely phosphorus and thought the result of atomic friction, if a man is only a stomach with its appurtenances; if there is no such thing as religious experience, then the testimony of this multitude of living witnesses to the risen Christ is properly ruled out of court: but not otherwise.

What then? We must close our churches; since preachers of the Gospel are proven to be false witnesses. Othello's occupation's gone. *Falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus.* Certainly if these witnesses are impeached as to their testimony concerning the great fundamental fact of the Gospel, there is nothing to be gained by lending an ear to their presentation of other details and particulars. Call in the evangelists and missionaries also, who are crossing the oceans and climbing the mountains and penetrating to the regions of darkness to declare the Gospel. All are false witnesses: call them in!

If such results, so dire and calamitous to Christianity, would follow the overthrow of the Doctrine

of the Resurrection, why is it that Christ's enemies have not accomplished it? And, above all, why do they not concentrate their attacks upon this citadel of the faith? Why do they persist in aiming their siege guns at points of relatively subordinate value? Ah, experience teaches.

We are informed that the new railway which is being constructed through Utah to the Pacific Coast has met with a sudden check. In building across an arm of the Great Salt Lake a sink hole was found, which seemed to indicate an underground outlet. Some thousands of carloads of earth were dumped into it; and seven steel piles were driven one upon the other. A few days ago a train was run across this structure and on reaching the critical place the track suddenly sank, and with it locomotive, tender and all. Now they propose to run the line some other way. It is for a like reason that the oft-repeated attack upon the Doctrine of the Resurrection has been practically given up. What a vast amount of dialectic energy has been dumped into it! What libraries of argument, in vain! Was it not so prophesied? "The kings of the earth do set themselves, and the rulers take counsel against Him; He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision!"

But somehow, Christ must be kept in His sepulchre. Pilate was right: "Ye have a watch; go your way; make it as sure as you can." And it is written, "They went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone and setting a watch." And God, out of heaven, laughed! A strong angel came down and rolled away the stone. The guards fell as dead men. And He came forth, wiping the death-dew from His brow. So

is come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

But if the adversary fail to keep Christ down, what then? The witnessing must go on. "Go quickly," said the angel at the sepulchre, "and tell the disciples that He is risen from the dead!" We must needs go and tell the world. Tell the world that Christ came, as the Messiah; that He lived a spotless life, to show what character is and what men should be; that He died, bearing our sins in His own body on the tree; and that He rose again, placing the seal of divine authority on His Messianic claims and redemptive work. Go tell the world that life and immortality are brought to light through Him. Go say that the faith of His followers is not in vain and that those who are fallen asleep in Christ are not perished. Go say, "Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept!" That is, as the early sheaf, which was waved at the altar, was a proof and prophecy of the ingathering of the harvest, so shall all God's Acre be reaped and garnered in the Great Day. Go say that as death is but an episode in the life-time of the seed-corn, so is our death but "the covered bridge, leading from light to light through a brief darkness." Go say that He who believeth in Christ hath everlasting life, because He hath "shown Himself to be the Son of God with power by His Resurrection from the dead" and hath thereby proven beyond all peradventure that He hath power on earth to forgive sin.

THE CHRISTIAN

O Antioch, thou teacher of the world!
From out thy portals passed the feet of those,
Who, banished and despised, have made thy name
The next in rank to proud Jerusalem.
Within thy gates the persecuted few
Who dared to rally round the holy cross
And worship Him whose sacred form it bore,
Were first called Christians.

J. L. Chester

XV

THE CHRISTIAN IN PHILISTIA

THE beacons were kindled on the heights around the historic valley of Esdraelon where the hosts of Israel were arrayed for war. To the south the Philistines were preparing to march against them; but there was trouble in the ranks. The officers of Achish had observed David and his followers in the rear ranks, and they made earnest and immediate protest: "What do these Hebrews here?" (I Sam. xxix: 3). It was indeed a strange and incongruous situation. But David had been so long a fugitive, hunted like a partridge among the mountains, that he was at his wit's end. And, moved by the magnanimity of Achish who had sheltered him in his exile, he begged to enlist under his banners. Just there he was in danger of making the mistake of his life. Had he not lost the fine edge of his moral perception, he could not for a moment have dreamed of falling into line with those who were marching to battle against his own people. The Lords of the Philistines saw the ambiguity of his position if he did not; and their protest was well-taken and well-timed: "Make this fellow return," they said; and David and his men drew off.

An old proverb runs, *Disce ab hoste*—"Learn from those who are opposed to you." The world has a clear opinion as to what should be expected of the followers

of Christ: and "there's wit there, ye'll get there, ye'll find nae itherwhere." No higher tribute is paid to the super-excellence of Christianity than the criticisms which are passed upon the inconsistencies of the followers of Christ; for in calling attention to our imperfections the critic emphasizes the fact that the religion which we so inadequately represent is a magnificent religion and the Christ whom we so awkwardly and unsuccessfully follow is the perfect One.

The world can read the Bible; it understands, moreover, the rules of service laid down by our Lord; and its interpretation of those rules is perhaps more rigid than that of the Church, for the very reason that it does not itself propose to obey them. It views them with a cold, impersonal, critical eye. Not for a moment does the world propose to conform to our faith, but it holds us rigidly to it.

I do not mean to say that public opinion is our ultimate rule of faith and practice. Far from it; but public opinion is not without significance. We cannot afford to be oblivious of what the Lords of the Philistines say about us.

> O wad some power the giftie gie us
> To see oursel's as ithers see us;
> It wad frae mony a blunder free us
> And foolish notion.

At the outset, the world knows that we are "a peculiar people" and that as such we have no business in the Philistines' ranks.

We do not like to be called "peculiar," but no alternative is left us. It is written of Christ, "He gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all

iniquity and purify unto Himself a peculiar people." The word is from *pecus,* "a flock," and it suggests the segregation of those who follow Christ.

We are distinguished by marks or "stigmata," clear and unmistakable. These are not superficial. A Christian, be he layman or minister, is not to be known merely by his "cloth" or outward forms of piety. The Lord expressed Himself in startling terms as to fringes and phylacteries, long prayers at the corner of the streets and almsgiving with the blare of trumpets. The real marks of a Christian are those which indicate an inward change manifesting itself in the outer life.

One of these is Regeneration, or "the gainbirth" as the fathers were fond of calling it. A Christian is understood to be a new man in Christ Jesus; old things have passed away, all things are become new. He has a new heart, conscience and will; new thoughts, purposes and aspirations; a new way of looking at things; new tastes and appetites; new visions of the future life.

And another of these marks is Sanctification. A Christian under the influence of the Holy Spirit, while not perfect nor professing to be, is bound to be growing better from day to day. On the one hand he is delivered from the penalty of past sin; "the handwriting of ordinances," which was against him, having been nailed to his Saviour's cross. His sins are blotted out, sunk in the depths of an unfathomable sea, cast behind the back of God. On the other hand he is consecrated to holiness. His conscience is so quickened that it has become sensitive to the mere appearance of evil. He so feels the lingering bondage of sinful habit that he longs to be delivered from "the body

of this death." He hates sin, grieves under the sense of it, loathes it, abhors it. All this is clearly involved in our profession. This is matter of common fame; it is known to the world; the Lords of the Philistines understand it.

The world knows also that we, as Christians, have a creed, and it expects us to believe it.

We have accepted Christ as our Prophet, or Teacher in spiritual things; and we call ourselves "disciples," because we sit learning at His feet. And when He speaks of God as our Father, of man as a sinner, and of Himself as the only Saviour, it looks to see us receive these elemental truths, together with all other teachings of Jesus, without a word of demur or a moment of hesitation. We have no room for an opinion or a "theory" beyond his *ipse dixit.* His word is ultimate. Our creed is what He says.

A leader in a recent political campaign was heard to say that the platform of his party went for nothing; and for this he was immediately set down in public opinion as a demagogue. For it is understood that the candidate of a political party must in honour be true to its principles. The same holds in the matter before us. A man who professes the Christian religion may deny its fundamental tenets; but, in that case, whatever he may think of himself, the people are aware that he is wearing false colors, and the Lords of the Philistines have a genuine contempt for him.

The world knows, furthermore, that we have a moral code; and it expects us to live up to it.

In the precepts of the Decalogue, as interpreted by our Lord in His Sermon on the Mount, we have our symbol of practical life. In pursuance of these pre-

cepts we are expected to be pure, upright, honest in all our dealings with our fellow men; to respect our neighbour's rights of life and property; to honour the Divine Name, remember the Sabbath day, and be humble and reverent before God. Our constant temptation is conformity to the world; but, being in the world, we are bound to live as pilgrims passing through it. We are to hold ourselves aloof from its evil ways, like the three youths in Babylon, like Lot in Sodom, like Jonah in Nineveh, like Paul in Athens. Are we ever moved to ask, "How far can I go into this or that without compromising my Lord or my religion?" Think of a bride asking how far she can go into impropriety without compromising the honour of her husband! The soul of a Christian, being betrothed to his Lord, must be kept unspotted from the world. Wherefore it is written, "Be ye not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Our unbelieving friends know still further, that we are under a definite commission, and they expect us to honour it.

Our Lord came to set up a kingdom of truth and righteousness on earth; and to His followers He said, "Seek ye first of all the kingdom." We seek this kingdom by declaring the evangel and doing good as we have opportunity unto all men.

Now suppose that a man who professes to follow Christ is found to be wholly absorbed in the pursuit of wealth or pleasure or sordid ambition, living as if the perishable things of this world were all or the most important part of life, what shall be thought of

him? "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." The Lords of the Philistines know this; and they cannot but conclude that an avowed Christian who yields himself to worldly pursuits and gives but the superflux of his time and energy to the things of the kingdom, is false to his marching orders. And this is a just opinion; the facts warrant it.

Again, the world expects a Christian to respect himself.

To be humble? Aye; but with that humility of which John Milton speaks,—"a lowly loftiness of mind which is exalted by its own humiliation." We would not forget that significant episode in the upper room when Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, saying to them, "I have given you an example that ye also should do as I have done to you." We are indeed to be humble in view of our sins, our littleness by nature, and our utter dependence on the heavenly grace. But never, never, must we forget that by that heavenly grace we are called to be sons and daughters of the living God; "and if sons, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ" to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away. The humility of Uriah Heep is not Christian. The truckling subserviency of Chadband and Pecksniff is not Christian. We are conscious of our infirmity and ill-desert: "We are not what we ought to be, we are not what we mean to be, but by the grace of God we are what we are." And better things are reserved for us. "Now are we sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be."

It is reasonably expected of us also, by those who are not of the household of faith, that we should love the brethren.

For this is one of the distinctive marks which our Lord put upon us: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." It is obvious, therefore, that envy, jealousy and censorious judgment are ruled out. The enemies of Jesus were accustomed to say of the members of the primitive Church, "Behold, how these Christians love one another!" That was a gracious tribute to the sincerity of their faith. It is well to sing in our public services, "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love;" but when in our churches we erect social barriers which take precedence of the rule of fellowship, it is obvious to the world that there is something wrong. If there come into our assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and we have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, "Sit thou here in a good place;" and say to the poor, "Stand thou there," or "Sit here under my footstool:" are we not then partial in ourselves? And do we not give occasion to thoughtful critics to say, "The teaching of Jesus was right; but there is one lesson which these Christians have not learned of Him."

And the world expects of the followers of Christ that they will have a passion for souls.

It is written of our Master, "He had compassion on the multitude." He said of Himself that He had come into the world "to seek and to save the lost;" and to His disciples He said, "As the Father hath sent

Me into the world, so send I you." The woman seeking the lost coin, the shepherd going out on the dark mountains after the lost sheep, the father awaiting the return of the prodigal from beyond the hills; in these we have a portrayal of the seeking Son of God. He seeks the lost. The lost! He so regarded men: as lost to truth, to righteousness, to their own high destiny, to heaven and God. We shall never catch His spirit of earnestness until we also regard the impenitent as lost. So long as we minimize sin, so long as we interpose doubts and questions as to its just penalty, so long as we permit the suggestion that there is any other way of salvation except the royal way of the cross, we shall be indifferent to the fate of our fellow men. The world knows what Jesus taught about this; and when it finds us standing idle in the marketplace, with the multitude passing by, lock step, quick step, on their way to eternal death, it concludes, with just reason, that we do not believe what Jesus said and are not alive to the tremendous duty and responsibility which He laid upon us.

In general terms, it is expected of us that we will follow Christ.

This is suggested by our name. We did not call ourselves Christians; the world so called us. The title was first given by the people of Antioch in derision; and they spake better than they meant. We are Christians because we profess to follow Christ. We are not our own; we are "bought with a price; not silver and gold, but the precious blood of Jesus, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." As such we are bound to follow Him, as sheep follow their shepherd, soldiers their leader, travellers their guide. Whither

shall we follow Him? Wherever His footsteps lead us. To the sanctuary? Yes; "He entered into the synagogue as His custom was." To the closet? Yes; "cold mountains and the midnight air witnessed the fervor of His prayer." To the oracles? Yes; He was ever a student of Scripture and revered it. To Bethesda? Is it not written, "He went about doing good?" If we tread in His footsteps, we shall find ourselves going to prisons and hospitals, to homes of the poor and suffering, to minister unto them. Will He lead us to Gethsemane? Can we drink His cup and be baptized with His baptism? Yea, Lord, we would be seen like Peter "in the garden" with Thee. Shall we follow even to the cross? Blessed be His name, the highest privilege of our life is to enter into the fellowship of His sufferings and death for guilty men!

And wherever we go we are bound to take our religion with us. He went to dinner in a Pharisee's house; but hear His table-talk! Our profession is not like a garment to be put on and taken off at pleasure; but rather like the shirt of Nessus, which could not be laid aside without taking the flesh with it. Our religion must be in the very blood and marrow of our bones; it must be through and through us.

It thus appears that we are a watched people. "We are compassed about," as Paul says, "by a great cloud of witnesses." He was thinking of the galleries of the Amphitheatre, crowded with spectators waiting to see how the athletes would run. We are watched in our business life, watched in social life, watched at home; "little pitchers have ears." And the onlooking world expects great things of us.

Alas, we all fall short; we fall short of even the world's standard of the Christian life. There is this to be said, however; we are trying: we have entered the race; we are reaching forth unto the things which are before and pressing toward the mark. Let our detractors do better if they can. It was a wise word that was placed by the artist Apollodorus over the entrance of his studio:

> 'Tis no hard thing to reprehend me,
> But let the man that blames me mend me.

It is no easy thing to live an exemplary Christian life. Come, friends, and try it!

But while we lament our shortcomings, we rejoice to know that our Lord can be touched with a feeling of our infirmities. "He remembereth that we are dust." He knows that we are hampered and handicapped by the remnants of sin abiding in us. He is not "an hard man."

And yet whatever the world may expect of us, He expects more. His standard is higher: "Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men." And again He says, "Ye are the light of the world; a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid; let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify God." We should not be unmindful of the just criticism of the world around us; but, after all, our high purpose is to please Him. O, if we could but realize the great things which He hopes and purposes concerning us!

The engineer of the Brooklyn bridge was confined

to his bed while it was in process of construction. Day after day, looking from his window, he saw its piers rise and the spider's web of cables cunningly formed. It had all been planned and held in his mind's eye; so that, when it was finished, being asked how it looked, he said, "It is precisely what I expected it to be." O, would that Christ might be able to say the same of us; that our life and character are according to His plans and purposes! Let us devote ourselves to the task of pleasing him. And, whatever other eyes may be upon us, let us live "as in the great Task-master's eye." So shall no man despise us: so shall God commend us.

XVI

THE CHRISTIAN ON HIS KNEES

ALL the world knows about the Pretorian Camp which lay outside the walls of Rome, to the northwest, under the brow of the Palatine Hill. It was the centre from which the imperial legions went forth to bear the Golden Eagle to the corners of the earth. But the occasion of the universal and perpetual fame of that Pretorian Camp is due largely to the fact that Paul was a prisoner there during the years pending his appeal from the Provincial Court at Cæsarea to the Supreme Court of the Empire. The prefect of the Guard was a battle-scarred veteran named Burrus, a broad-minded man. It was through his leniency that Paul was allowed the freedom of the camp, while occupying his "own hired house." The law requiring him to be chained to a guard day and night could not be relaxed; but he was permitted to receive his friends and preach the Gospel to such as would hear him. As time passed the Apostle gathered around him a group of devoted friends, among whom was Epaphras, a native of Colosse and pastor of the Christian Church in that city, a prisoner in chains also for the Gospel's sake.

All that we know of Epaphras is recorded in a few brief sentences: but one of these is more significant than an elaborate biography; it runs on this wise, "Epaphras saluteth you, always labouring fervently

in prayers for you" (Col. iv: 12), to which Paul adds, "I bear him record that he hath a great zeal for you."

Now this occurs in the letter which Paul wrote to the Colossian Church, of which Epaphras had been pastor; and it gives us to understand that, though in exile, he had lost none of his devotion to his parish. There was, indeed, a special occasion for solicitude, since "the Colossian heresy," a Gnostic denial of the divinity of Christ, was just then making havoc with the weaker brethren. Epaphras could do nothing but pray; but this he did incessantly. The phrase "always labouring fervently in prayers for you" indicates that he made this the constant business of his prison life; and Paul's "I bear him record" seems to indicate that he had seen Epaphras on his knees, had overheard his earnest appeals, had marked the moving of his lips.

All this is like a window opened into the power-house of the Church; for it is a true saying, "A good man's prayers will from the deepest dungeon climb to heaven's height and bring a blessing down." It was doubtless an imposing sight when, from that Pretorian Camp, the armies of Cæsar marched forth to war; but not so potent in enduring results as were these "fervent labours" of Epaphras on his knees. Here is the constant factor in the problem of spiritual conquest. It matters not how rapidly the world may move, it cannot move away from the power of intercessory prayer any more than it can from the power of gravitation; nor can it make any improvement upon it.

Christ Himself is the great Intercessor.

The significance of His intercession is due to the fact that He changes places with us. We are accustomed to use the word "vicarious" with reference to His death; but it applies equally to his life. The word is derived from *vix,* which may be rendered "turn" or "change," though it has no exact equivalent in the English tongue. One of our familiar sayings is, "Put yourself in his place;" by which we mean that it is impossible to make due allowance for another unless we can change places with him. Now this is exactly what Christ did; He came into the world to identify Himself with us. From the moment when He assumed our nature, in the stable at Bethlehem, His life was, is and evermore will be vicarious. He became flesh; He entered into our estate of common toil; He bare our sickness. He knew the heartache of the multitude and "had compassion on them." He prayed for them; He "laboured fervently in prayers" for them. His life was one long intercessory prayer, a prayer without ceasing, for those whom He came to seek and save.

For one moment in Gethsemane He seemed to pray for Himself; "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me!" That was the cry of the human; every nerve and sinew quivering in prophetic apprehension of the agony of the cross. Yet before that prayer was ended, it had resolved itself into an utterly self-forgetful plea for others; "O My Father, if it be not possible that this cup shall pass from Me, Thy will be done!" In other words, "Whatever may befall Me, save Thou the souls of men!"

His death was the consummation of the mighty prayer which pervaded His life. The hands that were

nailed to the cross were uplifted to heaven in pleading, "Give Me the heathen for My inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for My possession" (Ps. ii:8); and were outstretched to sinners in invitation, "Look unto Me all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved" (Isa. xlv:22). In the midst of the unutterable agony His prayer found utterance, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!"

Was it answered? It was surely answered in the case of the soldier in charge of the execution, who was moved to say, "Verily, this was the Son of God." No doubt it was answered in the case of many of the daughters of Jerusalem who followed Him to Golgotha, weeping and beating upon their breasts. It may be that some of the soldiers who, casting dice in their helmets, raffled for His girdle, His sandals and His seamless robe, afterwards recalled the strange events of that extraordinary day and were moved to accept Christ as their Saviour from sin.

Nor was the mighty prayer of Jesus concluded with His death. He ascended into the heavens where He "ever liveth to make intercession for us." The similitude is that of the High Priest entering the Holy of Holies, on the Great Day of Atonement, with the blood of sacrifice in his hands, to plead for the deliverance of the people from their sins: "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. ix:24).

It is only a step from Christ to the Christian.

As *vix* is the keynote of the Master's life so must

it be of ours. To do, to live, to die, to labour fervently in prayers for others; this is the great duty that devolves upon us.

Am I not to pray for myself, then? Yes; "Without ceasing." The beginning of the Christian life is signalized by one great prayer which pierces heaven and brings salvation down; to wit, the prayer of the dying thief, "Lord, remember *me!*" No man can truly give himself to the welfare of others until he has thus definitely settled his own relations with God.

But, that done, he is no longer to be ministered unto but to minister, as debtor to every man. He has passed out of self-seeking into the vicarious life, which he is henceforth to live in fellowship with Christ. His one duty is "to seek and to save." But can a man convert another man? Aye; else what is the meaning of this, "He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death and shall hide a multitude of sins?" We are able, by our prayers, to enlist the power of God in behalf of those for whom we desire the blessings of eternal life. Pastors can save their parishioners; parents can save their children. "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of."

It is incumbent upon us, also, to pray for Christ. As it is written, "Prayer also shall be made for Him continually" (Ps. lxxii: 15). This is the meaning of our daily petition, "Thy kingdom come;" that is, Let men and nations be brought to a knowledge of Thy saving grace; that the time may be hastened when the tabernacle of God shall be among men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be their God.

It is related that when Dr. Backus, the President of Hamilton College, was informed by his physician that he had only half an hour to live, he said, "Then help me out of bed and to my knees quickly that I may pray for the world." There spoke the Christian. Self was forgotten; the souls for whom Christ died were remembered; and Christ Himself was all in all.

But what assurance have we that our intercessory prayers are answered? This brings us to the original question as to the efficacy of prayer; and that question cannot be determined by scientific tests. The man who insists upon a mathematical proof of God will inevitably find that his God is reduced to an impalpable ghost of nothing. If he requires a scientific demonstration of immortality, he is bound to conclude that he is no better than the dog lying before his feet. Science has to do with everything within the province of the senses; it has nothing to do with spiritual truth, since "spiritual things are spiritually discerned." In that realm its logical ultimatum is agnosticism: the bald, frightful denial of Fichte, "I cannot assert that I know anything, not even that I know nothing at all."

But while it is admitted that prayer is not a mathematical *quod erat demonstrandum,* it must not be concluded that it is not therefore a substantial fact. It is a spiritual fact; but none the less a fact because it lies beyond the apprehension of the senses. Prayer is not a dream, not a theory, not an emotion; it is a thing, an instrument to an end; as real as the bowstring with which one draws the arrow to its head, as the hammer with which he drives a nail, or the ax with which he fells a tree.

We place against all scientific and philosophic statement the supreme authority of the Word of God. If one promise, and one only, had ever been spoken, that would have been enough; "Ask, and it shall be given you." But add to this the hundreds of exceeding great and precious promises with which God has been pleased to buttress the strength of "the weakest saint upon his knees." One man in prayer shall put ten thousand to flight. And what of two men in prayer? "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven" (Matt. xviii: 19). The word agree is *sumphoneein;* that is, symphonize; the two ascending prayers shall so blend as to make harmony before God. And when a whole Church is united in prayer, what then? Ask Peter, for whose deliverance from prison the Church in Jerusalem "prayed without ceasing unto God;" and he will tell you how, while his friends were still upon their knees, an angel came, saying, "Arise up quickly," and, behold, his chains fell off!

And to the divine word add the results of personal experience. Let all the philisophers in the world tell me that natural law is an insuperable obstacle to the prevalence of prayer, and I will answer, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard and saved him out of all his trouble!" And I am only one of a great multitude that no man can number. Here is Abraham pleading for Sodom: "If there be fifty righteous within the city, Lord, spare it." And the Lord answers, "I will spare it."—"Peradventure there be forty-five in the city."—and again he answers, "I will spare it."—"Peradventure there be forty."—"I will spare it."

—"Peradventure there be thirty."—"I will spare it."—"Peradventure there be twenty."—"I will spare it."—"Peradventure there be ten."—"I will spare it."—And the limit was reached only when the faith of Abraham gave out.

Here is Moses pleading for the people who had sinned in the matter of the golden calf; "O, this people have sinned a great sin and have made them gods of gold; yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—and if not blot me, I pray thee, out of Thy book!" And the Lord said, "Go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee."

And here is Nehemiah, the cupbearer of Artaxerxes, pleading for the deliverance of the Jewish exiles, "Bring them, O Lord, unto the place of which Thou hast said, I have chosen to set My name there." And the marvelous answer is the proclamation of Cyrus. Behold the caravans on their way to rebuild the temple and ruined walls of the Holy City.

On the northern shore of Africa kneels a mother, watching with tearful eyes the vanishing sails of a ship that carries her son away to the dissipations of Rome. She is pleading that he may be converted to Christ; and nothing seems less probable than an answer. Yet the time came when Monica stood in the doorway of her oratory by the sea, and her son Augustine knelt at her feet avowing that through her abundant prayers he had been constrained to acknowledge the claims of the gracious Son of God.

In one of the galleries of Spurgeon's tabernacle sat a half-paralyzed woman who was physically disqualified for active service. But every Sabbath she chose from the great congregation a single face, the face

perhaps of a nameless stranger, and made it her business during the week to pray for that one. The Great Day alone can reveal the results of her intercessory petitions; but Spurgeon said, "Of all my parishioners there was none who laboured more fervently than she."

In my own early ministry, while pastor of a mission chapel here in New York, I learned of a Christian boy of fourteen years, long confined to his bed, who had made it his habit to pray for his classmates in the Sunday School. After his death, a well-thumbed paper was found under his pillow on which were written the names of twelve lads, all converted save one, who was also presently brought into the Church of God.

We must not neglect to say, however, that whatever of power there is in intercessory prayer is wholly of grace. God reserves His sovereign authority in these as in other premises. He has a right to refuse; a fact to be remembered, since some people have an idea, apparently, that prayer works like an automatic machine, dropping in a prayer and drawing out an answer. We are not dealing, however, with insensate law, but with a sovereign God. He has, nevertheless, been pleased to put Himself within our power, in a measure, and has so assured us; and this assurance is by the purchase of Christ. We approach the throne of the heavenly grace, through His sacrifice, as by "a new and living way." We make our supplication "in Jesus' name" and "for Jesus' sake." Our intercession is reinforced by His intercession. "We know not what to pray for as we ought," but our prayers pass through His hands as through the hands of a censor, on their

way to God. In Longfellow's "Legend of Prayer" he speaks of the Angel Sandalphon who

> Stands listening breathless
> To sounds that ascend from below,
> From the spirits of earth that adore,
> From the souls that entreat and implore
> In the fervor and passion of prayer;
> From the hearts that are broken with losses
> And weary with dragging their crosses,
> Too heavy for mortals to bear;
> And he gathers the prayers as he stands,
> And they change into flowers in his hands,
> Into garlands of purple and red;
> And beneath the great arch of the portal,
> Through the streets of the city immortal,
> Is wafted the fragrance they shed.

For Sandalphon read Christ; and you have the rationale of intercessory prayer. All our supplications go heavenward with the red stains of Redemption upon them. All are presented with the endorsement and furtherance of the great Advocate who ever pleads for us.

But suppose a Christian lives this vicarious life and prays unceasingly this intercessory prayer, *what becomes of himself?* Ah, this reveals the very glory of the Christian life; it is forgetfulness of self in solicitude for others. He who shuts himself up within a narrow circle of supplication in his own behalf, to wit, that he may be saved and sanctified, is still standing on the mere threshold of his high-calling. Character is not wrought by a dead lift, but is a normal growth. Some one has said that "character is a by-product;" by which I suppose he means it is not the destination toward which we go, but the beauty and fragrance

which we gather along the way. Our real destination is usefulness; that is, the service of the kingdom. The three steps of the Christian life, as set forth by one of the old fathers, are these: "Out of self, unto Christ, into glory." Out of self is the beginning of all; as the Master said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me."

It remains to say that there is one condition affixed to the efficacy of prayer and only one, namely, that the petitioner shall be able to begin his prayer on this wise, "Our Father." In order to do that, however, he must be in right relations with God. And this is impossible until he has accepted the overtures of God's mercy in Christ. Then "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." There is no "righteous man" except the man who formulates his prayers in filial terms. Faith, sincerity, reverence, importunity, humble acquiescence are all embraced in "Our Father." He who can thus approach God, may ask what he will and it shall be done unto him. Therefore, to your knees, O Israel! Pray on! Pray and never faint. Ministers, pray for your people. Parents, pray for your sons and daughters. Pray for your friends and companions. Pray with faith, believing. Pray on! Pray on!

THE CHURCH

Once the welcome light has broken,
    Who shall say
What the unimagined glories
    Of the day—
What the evil that shall perish
    In its ray?
Aid the dawning, tongue and pen;
Aid it, hopes of honest men!
Aid it, paper—aid it, type—
Aid it, for the hour is ripe,
And our earnest must not slacken
    Into play.
Men of thought, and men of action,
    Clear the way!

CHARLES MACKAY

XVII

IS PROTESTANTISM A FAILURE?

THE strongest form of affirmation possible to the Greeks was in the word *nè,* the particle of adjuration, which is rendered in both the King James and Revised versions "I protest" (I. Cor. xv:31). This would appear to militate against the opinion prevalent in some quarters, that the name "Protestant" is open to objection on the ground that it suggests a denial of error rather than a downright and positive declaration of truth.

The word is from *pro-testari,* meaning to testify for or in behalf of. In the Latin, as in Old English, it was applied not only to the offering of evidence but to the proving of a case. Then as now hearsay evidence was ruled out; the witness, as a "protestant," was required to testify concerning that which he had "seen with his eyes and handled with his hands" (I John i:1-3).

In the last interview of Jesus with His disciples He said, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts i:8). As witnesses, *martyres,* or "Protestants," our commission is to forthtell in the most positive manner, the truth of the Gospel. The Gospel is a case in Court, we are the witnesses and the world is the Jury that sits in judgment on the evidence which we offer to sustain it.

The name "Protestant" was first applied to Luther and his associates in the Council of Spires, A. D. 1529, when they presented a formal "Expostulation" against certain errors; as others, for a like reason, are called "Dissenters" and "Non-conformists" in these days. But the negative form of the Expostulation of Spires was merely incidental to the reaffirmation with a tremendous emphasis, of certain vital and positive facts.

It was necessary that Protestantism, at the outset, should assume a negative as well as a positive form. All truth is a remonstrance against error. Every affirmation is bifrontal. You cannot say "This is a fair day" without denying, by implication, that it rains. The sun is the great Protestant in the realm of nature; It confutes the night, miasm and disease, owls and jackals, ghosts and spectres. But even while confuting it affirms; the birds begin to sing, the heavens are illumined with red and azure glory, the grass blades in the meadow are hung with diamonds, the wheels of commerce revolve, and the roar of industry is heard in the great centres of life. Thus the denials of Protestantism, however necessary, are but incidental to its great positive propositions. Its denials cover all false innovations; its affirmations embrace the fundamentals of the Gospel.

It is a mistake to suppose that Protestantism, except in name, came in with the Reformation. The Reformation was merely the revival of a dormant principle. In the hand of one of Belzoni's mummies, taken from a crypt by the river side in Egypt a hundred years ago, was found a bulb. It had been within the clasp of that dead man for three thousand years; but being planted, it is said to have put forth newness of life.

All that the reformers did was to unclasp the stiff fingers of a Church dead in formalism and take therefrom a form of religion, which, though it shared in the darkness of death, had never died; and they planted it, and like the mustard seed of the parable it grew and became a tree, so that the fowls of the air lodge in the branches of it.

So then the Reformation was not a revolution, since it introduced nothing new. It was distinctly a renaissance or restoration, a getting back to original and essential things. The Church had forgotten the faith of the fathers; had overlaid Scripture with old wives' fables; had pushed Christ aside to make way for the Pope and the hierarchy; had substituted the mint, anise and cummin of ceremonialism for the weightier matters of truth and righteousness. The lights of the Sanctuary were gone out and there was a famine of the word. At length the abomination of desolation was reached when King Henry IV, under pain of excommunication, crossed the Alps in midwinter and, presented himself in sackcloth at Canossa; where, after waiting three days at the Pope's threshold, he was absolved and permitted to kiss the foot of His Holiness. The "dark ages" were then at their darkest; it was time for a reformation, for the breaking of a better day.

In the museum of Prague there is a picture, in an old missal, representing a fagot-fire at which one man is kindling the spark, another blowing the flame and still another waving a blazing torch. These are the three original Protestants, who were instrumental under God in bringing in the Reformation, each of whom stood for one of its great positive principles.

I. *The man kindling the spark was Wiclif,* whose

watchword was "Back to the Bible!" The search-warrant which Christ placed in the hands of the people when He said "Search the Scriptures" had been snatched away and appropriated by the Pope and hierarchy. So far as the people were concerned the Bible was a closed book; it was kept in the cloisters or chained to the high-altars of the cathedrals; and when read to the multitudes it was read in an unknown tongue. Wiclif said, "I will translate the Scriptures into the vernacular; so that every plowboy may read them as he toils among the furrows." His Bible was published in 1384; and was immediately placed in the *Index Expurgatorius.* Wiclif himself was persecuted until his death, and by order of the Council of Constance his bones were exhumed and burned; the ashes were cast upon the river and the river carried them to the sea. But the key-note of Protestantism had been struck: "A true Bible and an open one!"

(1) *As Protestants we believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures as the veritable Word of God.* It is not for us closely to define inspiration or declare the method of it. The Mohammedans can tell you precisely how the Koran was delivered to them. It had been recorded from all eternity on the tables beside the throne of God. In fulness of time it was transcribed by the angel Gabriel who caused it to be written on palm leaves, the shoulder blades of camels and the breasts of men, and so placed before Mohammed's eyes and made current among men. We cannot speak so clearly as to the manner in which our Scriptures came from God. It is quite enough for us to know that holy men wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. We are satisfied with the assurance that all Scripture given by

inspiration is profitable for us. The word is, *Theopneustos;* that is, God-breathed. God breathed it.

(2) *The Scriptures thus delivered stand alone as our infallible rule of life.* They are separated by their absolute truth and trustworthiness from all other books. We sometimes speak of the inspiration of Homer and Dante, of Virgil and Shakespeare; it is hardly necessary to say, however, that their inspiration is of a totally different sort and implies no gift of infallibility. The holy men who were chosen to write Scripture were endued with power to declare without error the whole counsel of God. The touchstone of Scripture is truthfulness. There is a vast accumulation of apocryphal writings, traditions and pseudo-gospels which are not without historical value, but not to be mentioned in the same breath with the inspired Word. The man who denies the truthfulness of Scripture sets himself against the consensus of the Protestant Churches and is, so far forth, a rationalist. The Protestant Church asserts its faith in Scripture as a true declaration of the divine will.

(3) *The Scriptures are free and open to every man.* In pursuance of this proposition the Protestant Church has multiplied the Scriptures in the vernacular until they are now circulated in more than three hundred various tongues and scattered over the world like leaves of the tree of life. We hold that all power is in this Word; the power of conversion, as it is written, "The Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit;" the power of sanctification, as implied in our Master's pontifical prayer, "Sanctify them by Thy truth, Thy Word is truth;"

the power of the world's ultimate deliverance, as it is written, "Go ye, evangelize," and again, "Preach the Word," and again, "As the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it to bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My Word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

The last three hundred years are the glory of all history. At the beginning of the 16th century the world was in darkness. The Scriptures were laid away in monasteries, where the monks were engaged in illuminating missals, chanting prayers and swinging censers. The people without, the unshod people under the shadow of the monasteries, were in mid-night darkness. The truth in the open Scriptures flew abroad like Milton's angel with the flaming torch. Schools, hospitals and institutions of mercy were multiplied along the way. The people became a power. The world began to recognize the dignity of man. Light came not in a sun-burst, but, as it pierced the primeval shadows of chaos, glimmering and trembling, brighter and brighter unto the perfect day; so the world moves on, under the illuminating power of the Scriptures, toward the restitution of all things.

II. *The second man at the bonfire* was John Huss whose watchword was, "Back to Christ!" He insisted that all priests and mediators must stand out of the way that the sinner might, through Christ alone, have access to God. This involved an incidental denial of the value of images, confessionals and ecclesi-

astical absolution. Huss was brought to the stake A. D. 1415, wearing a yellow cap painted with red devils; his ashes were sprinkled on the river and carried to the sea.

(1) *As Protestants we hold that Christ is the foundation of His Church.* When He said to Peter, who had just made the good confession, "Thou art *Petros*, and on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it," He meant not that Peter was to be the foundation of the Church, but rather the great truth to which Peter had just given utterance: "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God." To say that Peter is the Rock is bad philology, bad philosophy, bad history, bad religion and bad common sense. The Apostle was called *Petros,* a stone, because, on account of his brave statement of the great fundamental truth, he was as a stone hewn out of the rock; just as Scipio was called Africanus, because he had traversed Africa; and just as Balboa was called Pacificus, because from the crags of Panama he first had seen the great western sea. This view is consistent with Scripture; for other foundation can no man lay than hath been laid, which is Jesus Christ. It is also consistent with history; for in point of fact Christ, and not Peter, has been and is the foundation of the Christian Church. Had it been otherwise, the story of the Church would in all probability have been written in these words: "The rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon it, and it fell." As it is, however, the history stands thus: "The rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon it, and it fell not because it was founded upon a rock." Thus the promise is ful-

filled, "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

(2) *We believe that Christ stands alone in His relation to the Church.* Indeed He is alone everywhere; in His Incarnation, in His unique life and character, in His passion, in His triumph over the grave, and in His intercession at the throne of the heavenly grace. That was a significant event which occurred on the Mount of Transfiguration where five of the most distinguished believers who ever lived were met in conference with Christ as to the decease which He was presently to accomplish for sinful men. The two sons of thunder were there and Peter himself; Moses the representative of the Law, and Elijah, who stood for the historic line of Prophets. And when the luminous cloud had enclosed them and Jesus had appeared to them in garments white and glistening, it was Peter who said, "Lord, let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee and one for Moses and one for Elias.—But he wist not what he said." The cloud vanished; Moses and Elijah went their way; "and they saw no man, but Jesus only." Jesus only! He is first, last, midst, and all in all.

The saints in glory are at an infinite remove from Him. Mary, the virgin mother, was blessed among women, but she was a mere woman, after all. It was a grave rebuke that was administered to John in Patmos when he fell at the feet of the angel to worship him. If ever a being, other than God Himself, was worthy of adoration, it was surely that strong angel who, with glowing face, had drawn the veil to reveal to the exiled evangelist his visions of the endless life. But when John would have accorded to him the

honour, he recoiled with horror from it saying, "See thou do it not for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets; worship God." This is why we Protestants have no saints in our calendar. This is why we have no *Ave Marias* in our liturgy. We believe that the word is imperative and final: "Worship God!"

(3) *Christ is accessible to all.* We deny the need of any intermediaries between the soul and Him. His word is, "Come unto me." The rending of the veil from the top to the bottom in the very hour when Jesus dying cried upon the cross, "It is finished!" meant that a new and living way was now opened into the holiest of all. Let priests and pontiffs and ecclesiastical principalities and powers of every sort now stand aside! Clear the way! The function of the Church and her ministers is not to guard the mercy-seat against the approach of the sinner, but simply to announce that Jesus waits to hear and comfort and strengthen and pardon and save him. Mediators? No! Intercessors? No! Confessors? O, no! This is child's play, but with serious consequences. Out upon all such interference with the sovereignty of Christ in holy things! In the new dispensation of the Spirit every man is made a king and priest unto God.

III. *The third man at the bonfire was Martin Luther,* who nailed the Ninety-five Theses of Protestantism to the Chapel door at Wittenberg A. D. 1517. His watch-word was, "Back to the Cross!" His great doctrine was Justification by Faith, which he called *articulum ecclesiæ stantis aut cadentis,* "the article of a standing or falling Church." This is the fundamental truth of

Christianity; it is the basis of personal character; and it is the sum and substance of all true preaching, since no man can be a true minister of Christ who does not point an index finger to the Cross saying, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

As a monk, Luther had happened on a volume of the Scriptures. He knew it only as a forbidden book. He read it furtively until he came to the place where it is written, "There is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved." He grew lean and haggard. The friars saluted him, "Good appetite, Brother Martin!" But the refectory had no charms for him. He returned again to his book. He read, "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." The very terror of his situation enchained him. And now he came upon the word that is written: "What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." The light began to break.

He betook himself to Rome. Great were his anticipations; a sore disappointment awaited him. He had hoped to see a multitude serving God in vows of poverty and consecration; he found palatial halls, where priests with round persons and rubicund faces gathered about the stores of famous wine-cellars. He looked for hair-cloth; and, lo, there were purple and fine linen, wealth, splendour, luxury. Here were Churches, marvels of architecture, adorned by the art of Raphael and Titian. He looked for voluntary poverty and simple piety; the air was full of ambition and political intrigue. The holy brothers smiled at him as a simple rustic. As he was saying mass, a neigh-

bour elbowed him: "We could say it seven times, brother, while thou art saying it once." He determined on penance, by climbing *Sancta Scala,* the Sacred Stairway, on his knees. Half way up he seemed to hear a voice saying, "The just shall live by faith!" and the day broke. He stood erect, a believer in Christ as his only Saviour from sin. Out of this experience was born the courage with which he ever defended his conviction; which fortified him on the historic occasion when, in the presence of secular and ecclesiastical potentates, at peril of his life, he exclaimed, "Here I stand: I cannot otherwise; God help me!"

The three fundamental truths of Protestantism, as indicated, are followed by two corollaries, to wit, Freedom and Progress.

As Protestants we stand for a free conscience. In the forty years prior to the Reformation no less than sixteen hundred "heretics" were burned at the stake. They died for the crime of doing their own thinking. A man has a right, so far as we are concerned, to be a heretic, an unbeliever or an infidel, since each must answer for himself before God. Alone was I born into the world, alone must I face the responsibilities and vicissitudes of life, alone must I pass through the Valley of the Shadow, and alone must I stand before the Judge of all.

The men who have taken this position have been the pioneers of progress along the ages. Lay down the map of Christendom and see how progress has been limited by the boundaries of Protestantism. Freedom and progress go hand in hand. The motto of the Papal Church is *Semper idem,* "Always the same."

The temperature of Saint Peter's at Rome is said to be invariable. But Protestantism is *nunquam idem;* that is, it moves with the moving world. There are only two important facts that are ever the same. Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day and forever; yet the world is constantly catching new glimpses of the beauty of his face. The Scriptures, also, abide unaltered, because God sealed the Book with seven seals and marked it, "Finis." There is no appendix, no addendum. The revelation was in the beginning adjusted to the progress of the succeeding ages. Nevertheless, as John Robinson said, there are "new lights ever bursting forth from the Word." But between these two abiding facts, Christ and the Bible, the Church moves onward in new enterprises to ever greater conquests of faith.

This then is Protestantism as outlined by Divine Providence in the logic of events. Its only pontiff is Christ, whose name is above every other which is named in heaven or on earth. Its only hierarchy is the procession of torch bearers, who go about to illuminate the dark places of cruelty and the habitations of death, and of reapers who come from harvest fields bringing their sheaves with them. Its only Book is that which was written by holy men as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. And its only creed is that which is framed from the Scriptures by men sitting at the feet of Christ. Its grandest cathedrals are the lives of righteous men who realize their kingly birth and destiny and who "know their rights and knowing dare maintain." Its most fervent litany is this, "From all tyranny of mind and conscience and heart, good Lord deliver us." Its grandest music is the breaking

of chains; and its magnificent gloria is—*Ave Maria,* Holy Mary, mother of God, pray for us? No! No! But this!

> All hail the power of Jesus' name!
> Let angels prostrate fall,
> Bring forth the royal diadem,
> And crown Him Lord of all.

It remains to consider *the results of Protestantism* as seen in the affairs of men and nations. There are those who say that its tendency is to make "freethinkers." This may be admitted, in so far as all truth has a negative as well as a positive pole. In every great movement there is danger that the pendulum, swinging away from error, may swing too far the other way. The revolt against Papal authority has not infrequently led to a denial of all authority whatsoever, save that of "the inner consciousness" or infallible *ego.* Liberty lies close to the borders of license. The man who thinks himself free must pause to consider that the only true freedom is "perfect obedience to perfect law." And the only true progress is that which is pursued along the paths of Scripture, whose ultimate and juridical authority must be recognized by every disciple of Christ. It is not strange that men stumble at the great doctrines of Protestantism, when we consider that Christ Himself was "set for the rise and fall of many," that His Gospel is "a savour of life unto life or of death unto death" and His Cross "foolishness" to some while to others it is "the wisdom and power of God."

But it cannot be gainsaid that Protestantism has been vitally associated with all the forward movements

of the last three centuries. At a Council in Rome, A. D. 1514, the supposed extermination of the Lollards and Waldenses was celebrated in a proclamation beginning, *Nemo reclamat, nullus obsistit!*—"The last of the Protestants is dead!" Since that time the world has changed hands. The three nations standing in the forefront of civilization and progress are England, Germany and America; all Protestant. If you want to find Romanism, you must go to Spain, Austro-Hungary and the South American Republics. A religion should be judged like an individual; it is its fruits that tell.

Is Protestantism destined to abide? That remains to be seen. It must die or live under the law of the survival of the fittest. In the great square at Wittenberg there stands a monument to the Reformation, on the base of which is this inscription, *"Ist's Gottes Werk, so wird's bestehen: ist's Menschen Werk, wird's untergehen."* If the great principles which constitute the very life of Protestantism—namely, the Supremacy of Christ, the Ultimate Authority of Scripture, and Justification by Faith—are abandoned, there will be no good reason for its further continuance; but if it stands for these propositions and faithfully applies them to the mighty work of universal evangelization, the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

XVIII

ARE REVIVALS OUT OF DATE?

I HEARD a minister remark lately—a young minister who is putting an unusual strain upon his energies in an earnest endeavour to keep up with the Zeitgeist—that revivals are out of date. His exact words were: "I doubt if we shall ever have an old-fashioned revival again. If we have any it will be an ethical revival, and the ministers who are preaching ethical sermons will be responsible for it." It is not easy to define ethical preaching; but the observation referred to calls up an incident in the experience of Ralph Wells of Sunday-school fame. He was going about among the teachers of his school on a tour of inspection when, pausing in the neighbourhood of a young lady, whose class of boys were listening with all their might, he heard her say: "Now, boys, about these Commandments. You know if you keep them you'll go to heaven; and that will be perfectly splendid. But if you break them; if you lie and steal and disobey your parents and so on, you'll go to hell; and, boys, that would be simply ridiculous." I would not intimate that the ethical preaching of our time is of this sort, nor would I deprecate the importance of ethics as an essential part of the preacher's work; but I venture to suggest that the preaching of ethics without the vital prepostulate of the atonement falls

immeasurably short of our business, and is infinitely unlikely to bring in a revival or accomplish the salvation of men.

If we want a definition of a revival we shall find it at Bethabara. A voice in the night; the voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Repent ye! For, behold, there cometh One after me whose shoes' latchet I am not worthy to unloose. He cometh as a woodman; and His ax shall be laid at the root of the trees. He cometh as an husbandman, fan in hand, to purge His floor. Wheat to the garner, chaff to the fire!" Strange preaching this for a decadent age; and little wonder that the people came in multitudes to hear it. The preacher was an anchorite; a weird, cadaverous man, clad in hair-cloth and girt about the loins with a leathern girdle. But power was upon him; and mightily were his hearers moved by the words that fell burning from his lips. The people were gathering from near and far. By the well-trodden but dangerous road from Jerusalem known as "The Bloody Way," by the caravan route through Samaria, by precipitous paths threading the cliffs beyond the river, they came thronging to the ford of Jordan to hear the prophet of the wilderness.

It was four hundred years since the voice of a prophet had been heard in Israel. "Behold, saith the Lord, I will send My messenger and he shall prepare the way before Me. But who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth? For he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap. But unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His

wings!" Thus spoke Malachi; and then the lights of the sanctuary went out. There was no more open vision. Night! a dark, unbroken, Egyptian night of four centuries! Doubt, unbelief, abandonment of the altar, eclipse of hope!

The great movement under John was a true revival; a prophetic type of all subsequent outpourings of the heavenly grace. For though it occurred in the lingering twilight of the Old Economy, and though its evangelist was in point of privilege less than the least in the Kingdom of God, yet that discourse of his, "Repent and believe in the Coming One!" was in no wise different from the preaching which ever moves the hearts and consciences of sinful men.

It is a singular fact that the earthly ministry of Christ was marked by no great ingathering. His was the red seed-sowing: the harvest was for those who should come after Him. "The works that I do," said He to His disciples, "shall ye do also; and greater works than these shall ye do, because I go unto my Father." In pursuance of those words came Pentecost, when the Spirit descended with a sound as of a rushing mighty wind; and the multitude, pricked to the heart, cried out for the pardon of their sins. Then Peter arose, and his words were an echo of Bethabara: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Christ for the remission of your sins." Three thousand souls were gathered into the Church that day. Then the disciples went everywhere preaching Christ, in Iconium, Antioch, Cæsarea, Samaria, Ephesus; and souls were converted, like willows springing up by the watercourses.

The story of the early Church is like the map of an undulating country: seasons of spiritual apathy followed by visitations of power. In the sixteenth century occurred the great revival known as the Reformation, in which the voice of Luther rose above all others, crying, "The just shall live by faith!" In the seventeenth century the fires of devotion were kept alive by such choice spirits as Milton and the Pietists, and fanned into a mighty flame by Owen and Baxter and John Bunyan. There were giants in those days! In the eighteenth century came the Wesleys with their field-preaching, the Tennents, Jonathan Edwards, and Whitefield making his frequent journeys across the sea to preach in these colonies, where he led fifty thousand souls to Christ. The opening of the nineteenth century was marked by the infidelity of Paine, Voltaire, Rousseau and their kind: so that righteous hearts were failing them for fear. But when the enemy came in like a flood, the Lord lifted up His standard. Rowland Hill, Lyman Beecher, Nettleton —a roll-call of mighties, with Moody to crown it, arose to bear aloft the banner of the cross. And, despite all forebodings, the numerical increase of the Church during this period was greater than in all the eighteen centuries before it.

And now what of the twentieth century? Are the refreshings of the future to be like those of the past, yet more abundant? Or is there somewhat in the intimations heard in certain quarters that "Revivals are out of date?" It would appear that the wish is father of the thought. If there must be a "new theology," there should obviously be a new way

of propagating it. If God is law, and Christ a mere man; if there is no virtue in the atoning blood, if the Holy Ghost is a mere influence, and if reason is to usurp the functions of faith, then farewell the old evangelism! But if the fundamental truths of Christianity are to abide, we may still look for seasons of refreshing and the flocking of souls to the Kingdom of Christ as doves to their windows.

Are revivals out of date? Not while there is trouble in the world. And the world is full of it; pain, weeping, disappointment, loneliness, and breaking hearts; envy, jealousy, lurking treachery and despair, death and bereavement. If the roofs were lifted, what should our eyes behold! Men and women tossing on beds of languishing, plotting deeds of shame and violence, peering through prison bars, meditating suicide, "Mad from life's history, glad to death's mystery, swift to be hurled, anywhere, anywhere out of the world!"

All this proceeds from sin. The Christian Scientist who pronounces disease an "opinion of mortal mind" is regarded as a weak sister; and the man —minister or otherwise—who minimizes sin is in the same category. The world knows better because its nerves and sinews are tingling with the pain of it. The papers of yesterday tell of a little child that swallowed a penny and, after hours of suffering, choked to death. The penny was visible under the *X*-ray, but no skill of surgery could remove it. No less real is the difficulty in the present case. Sin is a visible, tangible, ubiquitous and (without Christ) irremediable fact.

Then just there lies the pertinency of the Bap-

tist's cry, "Repent ye!" Not that repentance can save. The sorrow that we call sin is beyond the reach of that other sorrow which we call repentance. But repentance is prerequisite to a cure. It is difficult to see how there can be any real turning to Christ without an adequate sense of the sinfulness of sin and an overwhelming desire to be rid of it. When this pain of conviction becomes epidemic, there is a cry "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Pentecost. But the needle must enter before the thread. The weird cry of the Baptist must be heard before the Lord's "Come unto Me." Sin must be painted in colors of fire; sin and death following after it.

Are revivals out of date? No! not while there is salvation in Christ. For, having found the source of all trouble, the vital question is, What will heal it? In recent years the efforts of medical scientists have been turned largely toward the discovery of disease germs. We are advised that the bacilli of typhus, sarcoma, and tuberculosis have possibly been found. What then? It remains to discover the germicide. That found, we shall so far forth have an end of the ills that human flesh is heir to.

But is there a cure for this heart malady? Aye, one only. While John was preaching by the Jordan, an obscure man of Nazareth, a carpenter, was working at His bench. This was the only-begotten Son of God who had come from heaven, taking flesh upon Him, that He might enter into the fellowship of our earthly life and suffer for our sins. A day came when He closed the door of His carpenter-shop and entered on His task. He betook Himself to the

synagogue, where, in the presence of the assembly, He opened the Scriptures and read: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." And then He added, "This day is the Scripture fulfilled in your ears!" A little later, He joined the multitude at the river-side, and John seeing Him cried, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the world's sin!"

This is the business of the evangelist, to point to Christ as the Lamb of God. Not to dream dreams, nor to philosophize, nor to present new theories of moral therapeutics, but to point a way to Him in whose sacrifice are gathered together all the virtues of all the sacrifices that were ever made on old-time altars, whose blood cleanseth from all sin.

Are revivals out of date? Not while the Church is more or less indifferent to her work. And alas! though the spirit be willing the flesh is weak. Oftentimes the bride sleeps, while the bridegroom agonizes, and he must needs awake her with the reproach of love, "Could ye not watch with me?"

Such apathy, whenever and wherever it occurs, may be traced to a misapprehension of the real business of the Church. It is an error to suppose that the Church is an organized body of truth-seekers. The value of truth is indeed above rubies; but, unlike the Holy Grail or the Golden Fleece, it is not far to seek. God has been pleased to give us in His oracles a revelation of truth and to emphasize it in

the teachings of His only-begotten Son who said, "I am the truth;" so that our quest ends at the oracles and at Jesus's feet.

It is a further mistake to suppose that the business of the Church is the mutual edification of believers. We are indeed bound by covenant vows to the building of character, in the imitation of Christ. But to turn aside from the straight line of our commission to enter the solitude and wrestle for "the deepening of the spiritual life" is an absurd procedure. "We must ourselves get into right relations with God," it is said, "before we can go out upon a campaign for souls." This is a false cry, and all the more so because it involves this modicum of truth, that we must ever be in a right attitude toward God. But when the fiery cross is kindled on the hills, when the blast of the silver trumpet is heard, when the banners are unfurled, then there is nothing to do but break camp and go forward. He is but a poor soldier who in the campaign tarries to gird himself while his comrades are speeding to the front; or who, like Meroz, instead of coming up to the help of the Lord against the mighty, abides among the sheep-folds listening to the bleating of the flock.

It is a further mistake to say that the supreme purpose of the Church is to "make this world a better place to live in." It is an axiomatic fact that a true follower of Christ must hold himself in readiness to do good as he has opportunity unto all men. He is to feed the hungry and clothe the naked as a matter of course; for did not Jesus say, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me?" But the Christian who al-

lows his energies to be monopolized by the sociological propositions of our time falls infinitely short of his Divine commission. To clothe the naked, feed the hungry, provide better homes for the neglected poor and send them out into eternity without a vital interest in the Gospel, is poor philanthropy from the standpoint of Christ. For "what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Sociology, standing by itself, is the Epicureanism of our time, since it speaks on this wise, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die."

By such conceptions of Christian life and service we have been sidetracked and diverted from the main concern, which is the quest of souls. The word of the Lord is plain, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost;" and, "As the Father hath sent me into the world so send I you."

All ecclesiology is in that word "Sent;" and the consummation of Christian duty is in that other word "Go." Go ye into the highways and the hedges; go ye to the uttermost parts of the earth; go ye everywhere and constrain them to come in! If we fail to apprehend these things, we are certain to fall short of our privilege and responsibility as followers of Christ.

Are revivals out of date? Not while the Holy Spirit is abroad. He is the executive of this economy. To Him, as third person of the ineffable Godhead, is committed the building up of the Kingdom, whose foundations were laid in Jesus' blood.

The instrument which for the most part He avowedly and habitually uses in the establishment of this Kingdom is the Word of God, which is said to

be "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." As a sword it pierces the seared conscience and convicts it of sin; and then, as balm of Gilead, it heals the wound by bringing the soul into pardon and peace with God.

But the Holy Spirit uses, also, the Man behind the sword. No doubt God could evangelize the world without us, but in infinite condescension and kindness He confers upon us the high privilege of co-operation with Him. We are promised an "enduement of power" for this work. What is this enduement? What is this power? The reference is not to any magical transfusion of supernatural force; there is nothing mysterious here. The enduement which a Christian receives for service is power in the practical use of the one weapon with which He proposes to bring in prisoners of hope. The sword-drill is the important thing. The function of the Holy Ghost is to open the Scriptures, to bathe their pages with light, and to anoint the reader's eyes with eye-salve that seeing he may see and understand. Thus he qualifies the workman for service, sending him forth as "a workman needing not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" —an expert swordsman of Christ.

Just here it becomes apparent why the much exploited "new theology" is not adequate to the business in hand. In eliminating the divine factor from the Scriptures it undermines all authority for the fundamental facts of the Gospel; and the logical

conclusion is that revivals are out of date. Let a meeting be called for evangelistic work, and you will observe that the friends of this new theology are so wholly out of their element that they can only sit twiddling their thumbs, while old-fashioned believers in the Word are planning and pleading for an outpouring of the Spirit and the salvation of souls. The old truths and revivals go or stay together. The so-called "new evangelism" is a misnomer inasmuch as it has no evangel. It minimizes sin and sin's penalty, it sterilizes faith, and puts dishonour on the Blood of Calvary, without which there is no remission for sin.

But however men may refuse to fall into rank or fall out along the way, the royal standards onward go. Revivals are not out of date nor ever will be until Armageddon, the last of revivals, shall sweep all sinners into the Kingdom of God.

It is fair to presume, however, that the revivals of the future will differ in detail and particular from those of the past. For history, notwithstanding the proverb, never repeats itself. The world moves and we move with it; else progress would mean nothing and there would be reason to doubt the persistent working of God.

It is probable that revivals will be marked by more of thoughtfulness and less of emotional excitement as the years move on. At the beginning of this century it was usual to hold meetings in groves of saplings, so that such as were seized with convulsions might have something to cling to. We dare not say that such manifestations were not in the power of the Spirit; but it is probable that in

these times of the larger diffusion of Gospel light the multitudes will more calmly think their way to God.

It is reasonable to suppose, moreover, that the revivals of the future will be more distributive in their character. Time was when the minister was looked to for the initial step; and not infrequently he felt constrained by a sense of personal incompetency to call in an evangelist. But for half a century, now, there have been training-schools within the Church in which the rank and file of Christians have been equipped and drilled for practical work. This means that every one must henceforth be his own evangelist, bearing his own commission, and going out as one man to save another man. A Christian worthy of the privilege of these times can no longer farm out his responsibility to evangelists in or out of "holy orders," but must himself be a fisher of men.

It is probable, also, that the revivals of the future will be more Biblical than ever. The thing that occurred at the water-gate, when Ezra with his assistants read from one official copy of the Scriptures to the assembled multitude, can never occur again, for there are Bibles everywhere in these days. The leaves of the Tree of Life are falling fast on all the children of men. And those who believe the Bible now — and they are an exceeding great multitude whom no man can number—believe it all the more because they have seen it pass through the fires of controversy without the smell of smoke upon it. The sword of the Spirit will flash more brightly than ever in the campaigns of the future. It will not be returned to its scabbard until it has fully accom-

plished the pleasure of the Lord and prospered in the thing whereto He sent it.

But all future revivals will be like those of the past in recognizing Jesus as Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end of the Gospel of life. It will ever be as it was by the Jordan when Jesus came to supplant John: and as He stood in the water the skies were opened, and a Voice, of which the voice from the wilderness was but an echo, said "This is My beloved Son; hear ye Him!"

In the suggestion of a revival there inevitably arises a question which searches the heart. Do we want it? Are we willing to enter into the spirit of self-surrender which must ever accompany it? Do we long and pray for it as those who cry, "How long! O Lord, how long?" Do we with faith expect it?

As Elijah knelt on Carmel with his face between his knees, pleading for rain, he bade his servant go look toward the sea. And he went and looked and answered, "There is nothing." Seven times Elijah said, "Go look toward the sea;" and it came to pass at the seventh time his servant said, "Behold, there arises a little cloud like a man's hand." The prophet sprang to his feet: "Go up," he cried, "and say unto Ahab, 'Prepare thy chariot and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not.'" And the hand of the Lord was upon Elijah, and he girded his loins, and ran before Ahab to the entrance of the city. Oh, for the faith that prays without ceasing and looks expectantly toward the sea! Oh, for the faith that welcomes the cloud and rejoices in the downpour of the early and the latter rains!

Ah no, revivals are not out of date! Nor can they be so long as the earth is thirsty, so long as God's people are willing to be blessed, so long as the promises of the Lord are Yea and Amen. Hear now what he saith: "Bring ye all tithes into the storehouse—tithes of time, energy, and possession—and prove me herewith, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

XIX

IS THE CHURCH LOSING GROUND?

IN a bay-window overlooking the Strand in London sat Thomas Carlyle, the cross-grained sage of Craigenputtoch, pen in hand and eyes upon the madding crowd. "There are in this city," he wrote, "some four millions of people, mostly fools." Nor was he far amiss in this generalization; only he should have added *quorum pars sum,* since the sanest has no sanity to boast of.

See the people: the immortals jostling one another along the busy ways; intent on getting together a little yellow dust or chasing butterflies and thistledown or grasping at laurel wreaths; beings "with the geometry of heaven in their brain and the unfathomable galaxies," born of God and bound for Eternity, killing time, caviling at destiny, flinging opportunity to the left hand and privilege to the right; their eyes hot with passion and brows scarred by the plowshare of vain chastisement: blind to the lessons of yesterday and reckless of to-morrow, furnishing forth the wedding-feast with the baked meats of the last funeral; wielding the lash or cringing under it; leading the rattling chariots to death, or following in chains; singers and dancers; kings and potentates; misers with muckrakes, profligates scattering their ill-gotten gains; the Upper Ten-thousand treading on the heels of the Submerged

Tenth and the Third Estate bearing the burdens of both; all sorts and conditions of men reeling, dancing, stalking, staggering—aye, "mostly fools;" fools who, "forever hastening to the grave, stoop downward as they run."

And who cares? God cares; that is, if God is our Father as we have supposed Him to be. If, however, the propositions of the much-exploited "New Theology" are correct—if God is an insensate Force and the Bible is an indifferent sort of "literature," and the world is "a fortuitous concourse of atoms," and man is the remote descendant of the primordial germ, and sin is a "belief of mortal mind," and life "a definite combination of heterogeneous changes both simultaneous and successive in correspondence with external coincidences and sequences," and thought is the result of atomic friction in the gray matter of the brain and Providence is coincidence, and hell is a nightmare and heaven a dream—then God does not care, and it would not much matter if He did.

But our Father has eyes to see, a heart to pity and almighty arms to save. He cares for the people. He cares for them distributively, calling them by name, numbering the very hairs of their heads. And He is no respecter of persons. Purple and homespun are alike to Him. A man's a man before Him. The meanest Zulu kneeling to a wooden fetish is as precious in His sight as the Baron Rothschild. He notes the guinea, not the guinea's stamp. To this Husbandman at the threshing floor the adventitious conditions which separate us into castes, as rich and poor, plebs and aristocrats, are but chaff which the

wind driveth away. All are His children and His love is toward all.

The preeminent proof of God's love for the people is in the fact that He so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. He knew the people to be "mostly fools;" yet, despite their folly He had compassion on them. And there is no discrimination in His grace, but universal amnesty on the sole condition that the rebel shall lay down his arms. In Christ we have the incarnate expression of this loving, seeking, saving God. It was prophesied by Ezekiel that he should go forth, in the fulness of time, to search on the dark mountains, "as a shepherd seeketh out his flock and delivereth them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day."

And the Church is a further expression of this compassionate love. It is made up of followers of Christ who are commissioned and under bonds to go out and bring the people back to God.

How is it then that, after the lapse of eighteen centuries, there are twelve hundred millions of unsaved people in the world? Is the Church therefore a failure? Nay; else there would not be four hundred millions of people to-day who acknowledge the claims of the Gospel. But what of the multitudes who still pass by, who see in Christ no form nor comeliness that they should desire Him, who hear the church-bells ringing and heed them not?

Who is to blame? In the last reduction the people are themselves to blame. For God hath nowhere

left Himself without a witness: there is not a soul among the lapsed masses who has not light enough for salvation if only he lived up to it; as Jesus said, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." But this did not prevent his profound compassion: "How often would I have gathered you together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings and ye would not!"

We ministers, also, are to blame. Let judgment begin at the house of the under-shepherds. We have a message to proclaim which should thrill through every fiber of our being and fall in burning words from our lips. What truths are these: God, the love that passeth knowledge, the tragedy of the cross, immortality, faith and duty, responsibility, righteousness and judgment to come! Yet how dull we are; how careful to round our periods and polish our rhetoric and air our learning and eloquence in the presence of souls bound for eternity! They tell us sometimes that we preach "beautiful sermons," the more's the pity. Souls famish on rhetoric, "faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null."

> Water, water everywhere,
> And all the boards did shrink;
> Water, water everywhere,
> And not a drop to drink!

But the fault is not ours alone; it is a true saying, "Like people like priest." The law of demand and supply is honoured in our congregations; and the rank and file of Christians are to blame for it. There is a misconception as to the mission of the Church. A bark sailing on the Pacific hailed a ship which

gave no token of life except a man feebly waving a signal of distress. It proved to be stricken with the plague. The captain, first mate, and steward were dead; the boatswain gone mad; the crew and passengers lying on the decks moaning for help. There are those who conceive the Church to be such a floating hospital as that, where men and women are chiefly intent upon saving themselves from spiritual death or, in their convalescence, pleading ever for the deepening of their spiritual life. But this is not the Church as Christ designed it. Nay, it is a relief ship going out to rescue stricken derelicts; it is a body of life-savers, self-forgetful, devoted, heroic, going forth to save their fellow men.

And along this line, if ever, we must win the lapsed masses. In some way or other, justly or unjustly, they have been alienated from the Church. At the bottom of their hearts they have the longing for everlasting life which is common to all, but they go their various ways, declining to join us. It behooves us to rest not until we have done our utmost to constrain them to come in.

To this end they must be given to understand at the outset that a cordial welcome awaits them. The Church must keep open house. Much that is said against the system of pew-rental is ill-grounded and fallacious. There is no good reason why we should not have our family pews: but there is a theory of the pew-rental which is utterly abominable; to wit, that a man can, for a monetary consideration, own a pew in fee simple and hold it against all comers. I believe this giveth an ill savor in the nostrils of God. All pews must be held under the conditions

of Christian hospitality. If I feel bound by common courtesy to admit the stranger who stands at the doorway of my home, I surely have no right to keep that stranger waiting in the vestibule of the house of God. The courtesy of the sanctuary should be, at least, upon as high a level as the courtesy of our domestic life. And let it ever be remembered that the sanctuary is not the house of the pewholder but the house of God.

We must, moreover, come into a closer touch with the people. They do not want our charity, but our fraternal sympathy. The plan of having Churches for the rich and "chapels" or missions for the poor may be necessary in present conditions, but only as a temporary expedient. God speed the day when it shall be understood that the Church is the divinely appointed place where the rich and the poor meet together and acknowledge the Lord as the maker of them all! To stand at arm's length and offer our beneficence to the people is not Christian treatment and they know it. The mind of the Third Estate may be inferred from a remark made in a recent assembly of handicraftsmen: "We are asked to accept a free library at the hands of a man who has coined millions out of our toil. We do not want his contribution of free literature. His money perish with him!" We may deprecate the sentiment, but it betrays the feeling of the poor. They resent the charity which comes like a bone thrown to a dog; they feel that they are entitled, in their pains and labors, to our cordial, practical sympathy. An ounce of such sympathy is better than a ton of distant charity. The night before the execution of John

Huss, as he was being hurried from the judgment hall to prison, he felt amid the crowd a hand grasping his and pressing it. He saw the friendly face, and that night he wrote, "God bless John of Chlum for that right hand of his!" This is what the people want; the right hand of love and sympathy and helpfulness in the name of the compassionate Son of God.

The Church needs, also, a wider sweep in her efforts to win the people. We have been accustomed to seek too exclusively the salvation of the souls of men. It is a mistake to think of the soul as something which a man carries about with him. This is not the Scriptural thought. Christ came to save the whole man; and he enjoined upon His followers the deliverance of the whole man. It is a difficult matter to consider soul and body apart; as Tristram Shandy said, "They are like a jerkin and its lining: rumple the one and you crumple the other." We have too often forgotten this, but our Master was mindful of it. He fed the five thousand while he preached to them. He healed disease while probing for the sin beneath it. He denounced the Pharisees not more for blocking the gateway of heaven than for devouring widows' houses.

We are reminded by those who make no profession of religion that we have not followed Christ into the dense and populous haunts of misery and shame. In so far as the point is well taken, let us not resent it. The only approach to a soul is through the atmosphere that environs it. In one of Dr. Guthrie's letters he tells of visiting, on a winter's day, a woman dying in an attic, on whom all his

earnest appeals made no impression. At length he said, "My good woman, do you not realize that you are passing into eternity? Do you care nothing that you must in a few moments stand before God in judgment?" She shivered as she drew the scant covering about her, and said, "No more would you, Dr. Guthrie, if you were as cold as I am!"

We are, for these reasons, bound to rejoice in the present discussion of sociological problems; but there is something else to be said on the other side. A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. In view of the relative importance of time and eternity it is manifestly the height of folly to lose sight of the more important issues in our eagerness to "make this world a better place to live in."

It is related that, at a recent service in one of our conventional churches, an old woman was so carried away by religious fervour that she cried, "Hallelujah!" Whereupon an usher reproved her: "What does this mean? What are you doing?" She said, "I am getting religion." To which he replied, "You should know, my good woman, that this is no place to get religion." The pathos of this incident far exceeds its humour. Is it true that there are Churches of Jesus Christ where the presentation of scientific and philosophical, ethical and sociological propositions is so emphasized that the religion of eternal salvation is practically ruled out? To spend one's energies in the betterment of the mere physical environment of the people is to undertake to boil the kettle from the top.

The greatest of sociological problems, when all is

said and done, is to regenerate the moral nature of humanity and bring it into harmony with the social order of the universe. God and immortality must come into the reckoning. Leigh Hunt was a poor philosopher; no "Abou Ben Adhem" who fails to recognize the supreme claims of the All-Father can be written down as one who truly "loves his fellow men;" for the Brotherhood of Man rests on the Fatherhood of God. Let us by all means make a heaven here below, but alas for us if we see not the larger heaven beyond. For as the flight of an eagle is to the sweep of the centuries, so is the life here to the life forever. And this is the life which is brought to light in the Gospel. The prisoner of Chillon, doomed to solitary despair, saw a rift in his dungeon wall. Dragging his chain, he clambered upward and looked through. There lay the silver lake framed in the mountains and the blue heavens over all. As he gazed through tears, a bird began to sing,

> A lovely bird with azure wings,
> And song that said a thousand things,
> And seemed to say them all to me.

Our world is populous with sorrowing souls; it is for us to lighten the pains of their imprisonment, but, best of all, to help them upward to the window that opens toward the eternal life. This is to bring them, despite all narrowness of circumstance, into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

In general terms, we need to get back to Christ. Let the mind that was in Christ Jesus be also in us. He was the people's Christ. He was crucified

on a hilltop, beside a thoroughfare, in presence of the multitude, with His hands stretched out. He tasted death for every man. The benefits of His vicarious death are offered on terms within the reach of all. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."

The words of His Gospel are great words, "All," "Every one," "Whoever," "Whosoever." Here surely is no respect of persons. The same terms are offered to Nicodemus,—Doctor of Divinity and Doctor of Laws by grace of the Sanhedrin,—and to the penitent thief hanging on the crumbling verge of the abyss. Rabbis and fishermen, knights and friendless outcasts, vestals and magdalens, gathered around His cross. The sublimest deed of self-sacrifice that earth or heaven ever gazed on was enacted there. It was the fitting climax and consummation of Christ's work for the people. There was never a moment in His ministry when He could not have relieved Himself from all danger by identifying Himself with the aristocratic party. The Jews, led by their phylacteried rabbis, wished Him to dispense salvation to them exclusively. His answer was: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

This "whosoever" was the shibboleth of His redemptive work. He had compassion on the multitudes, seeing them as sheep without a shepherd. The philosophers by the Ilissus had elaborated a

system for the learned few; Jesus set forth a Gospel plain and simple for wayfaring men. Wherefore "the people heard Him," "the people pressed upon Him," "The common people heard Him gladly." His devotion to the welfare of the masses, "the unshod multitude," provoked the wrath of the ecclesiastical gentry. It was they who sentenced Him to death; and, dying, He "tasted death for every man."

And before He ascended into the heavens He gathered His disciples about Him and put them under commission, saying, "Go ye!" A paper was recently read in a ministerial association on "The Secret of Winning the Masses." There is no secret about it. The Lord made it plain long ago. He marked out the plan of campaign. As to Foreign Missions, He said, "Go ye into all lands and preach My Gospel," and as to Home Missions He said, "Go ye out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in." In any case and always, "Go!" It is not enough to build sanctuaries and invite the people to come in. We must go out and constrain them. Paul won Macedonia when he went out after it. Hans Egede won Greenland when he went out after it. Christ won the world because He laid aside the robes of heaven and went out after it. The Church will win the unchurched masses when it leaves its cloistered retirement and goes out after them.

CONCLUSION

Life is coming, Death is going,
Quickly past us time is flowing;
Day is dawning, Time is flying,
Soon shall end this grief and sighing!
Rest is nearing, Toil is ending,
Homeward now our path is bending;
Right is hasting, Wrong is leaving,
Earth ere long shall cease its grieving.
Love is coming, Hate is going,
Seeds of unity are sowing;
Fear is passing, Hope is brightening;
Burdened brows and hearts are lightening;
Cells are bursting, Chains are breaking,
Weary spirits cease their waking.
Tears are drying, Songs are breaking,
Earth's glad echoes are awaking.
Graves are opening, Dead are meeting,
Heaven and earth each other greeting.
Hill and vale put on their gladness,
Not a trace remains of sadness.
Amen, Amen!

BONAR

XX

A FORECAST OF THE GOLDEN AGE

IN the account of the Creation there are two words, *tohu vavohu,* rendered "without form and void," which cover a period of immeasurable æons. The world was being fused and smelted into shape. The elements were in conflict. The incandescent mass was enveloped by clouds of igneous and corrosive vapours, and fitfully illuminated by electric gleams issuing from the tossing maelstrom. Such was "Chaos;" in which, as in a great blast-furnace, were forged the beams and girders of the mighty temple which was being reared for the habitation of man. Ovid, the last of the Augustan poets, describes it thus:

The face of nature
Was a rude, tumultuous mass;
A lifeless lump, unfashioned and unframed,
Of jarring elements. 'Twas "Chaos" named.
No sun had lighted up the world to view;
No moon did yet her blunted horns renew;
Nor yet was earth suspended in the sky;
Nor, poised, did on her own foundations lie;
Nor seas about the shores their arms had thrown;
But air and earth and water all were one.
The air was void of light, the earth unstable,
The water's dark abyss unnavigable.
No certain form on any was impressed:
All were confused and each disturbed the rest.

In contrast with this Pagan conception of the world's formative period we cite the description of Milton in his Paradise Lost:

> Matter unformed and void! Darkness profound
> Covered the abyss: but on the watery calm
> His brooding wings the Spirit of God outspread,
> And vital virtue infus'd, and vital warmth
> Throughout the fluid mass; but downward purged
> The black, tartareous, cold, infernal dregs
> Adverse to life. Then founded, then conglobed
> Like things to like, the rest to several place
> Disparted, and between spun out the air;
> And earth self-balanced on her centre hung.

The point of vital contrast between the two conceptions is marked in Milton's words, "But on the watery calm his brooding wings the Spirit of God outspread." To the pagan poet Chaos was "confusion worse confounded;" to the Christian poet the warring elements were under the control of an omniscient power whose ultimate purpose was to infuse "vital virtue" and "vital warmth" throughout the fluid mass. Thus, in process of the mighty æons, the clouds lifted and "between spun out the air." Out of the molten mass of mingled and embattled elements the islands and mountains, jostling and shouldering one another in fierce titanic strife, emerged and towered aloft. Light triumphed over darkness, order succeeded discord, cosmos was evolved out of chaos; life appeared, the fields blossomed and the birds began to sing.

A counterpart to this is found in the province of moral and religious things. We are living in a preparatory period; we are getting ready for the Golden

Age. The confusions and controversies of our time are precursory to ultimate and universal order and symmetry. Truth and error jostle one another like the elements in primeval chaos; theism and atheism, faith and materialism, Christianity and antichrist are at endless strife. It presents the appearance of a mighty convulsion, an impending cataclysm, so that some are moved to cry, "The end of the world is drawing near!" No, no; this is not the end, but the beginning of the world. The Spirit of God is brooding over all, so that out of this apparent disorder is destined to come the reign of millennial truth and righteousness. The "one far-off divine event," toward which this warring of the moral elements is moving with the certainty of a divine ordinance, is that Golden Age in which the tabernacle of God shall be among men.

It may not be unprofitable to venture a forecast respecting the outlines of truth as they will then appear. For the fluid conflict of opinion in these chaotic times is destined to furnish forth the outlines of the final Confession of Faith. In this purpose we shall not proceed along the lines of mere hypothesis; since, believing in the supervision of the Spirit that broods over all, and in the promise of the Master "He shall lead you into all the truth," we have solid ground on which to proceed and a rational faith by which to anticipate the final oncome.

It is safe to say that *the creed of the Golden Age will be made up of simple truths.*

A system which is to be of universal prevalence must of necessity be such as addresses itself to all sorts and conditions of men. One of the early

fathers said, "Christianity is a river deep enough to drown an elephant and yet so shallow that a sheep may ford it." No doubt there are depths; but the saving doctrines of our faith are not so. The King's highway is for the simplest of wayfaring men.

Over the doorway of one of the Greek schools was the legend, "Let no one who has not mastered mathematics presume to enter here." The philosophy of the Greeks was for the select few. Let us place over against that inscription the words of the Lord Jesus, who taking a child upon His knee said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye become as this little child, ye shall in no wise enter the kingdom of God." Here is a deeper, broader, far more significant and prophetic saying than we have thought it. The esoteric systems must die. The truth that ultimately prevails will be as clear as the break of day.

Paul, in his letter to the Corinthian Church, inquires, "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world?" Which he answers on this wise, "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise and the weak things to confound the mighty, that no flesh should glory in His presence."

The world by its wisdom has not thus far been able to find out God or the important truths which centre in God. In any case, indeed, wisdom is but a relative term. Everything depends on circumstances. It has been observed that when a ship is on the stocks, the shipbuilder is the wise man; when she is under sail the skipper, with his chart, is the wise man; but when she is wrecked on a desert

island and provisions are short, the ship's cook is the wise man. Scientists and philosophers have their place; but when the question of salvation is raised they, unaided, are at their wits' end.

The mind unbiased by the methods of the schools is under obvious limitations, but there is no doubt as to its receptive attitude toward the fundamentals of spiritual truth. It is a common observation among those who are familiar with children, that their wise sayings are frequently such as indicate a close and intimate touch with God. Wordsworth pays tribute to this fact in his "Intimations of Imortality," where he says, "Heaven lies about us in our infancy;" and Miss Muloch in her words to a sleeping child:

> The spirit that there lies sleeping now
> Shall rise like a giant and make men bow
> As to one heaven-chosen amongst his peers.
> Rebels within thee and foes without
> Will snatch at thy crown;
> But march on glorious,
> Martyr, yet monarch! till angels shout
> As thou sittest at the feet of God victorious,
> Philip, my King!

We remark, also, that *the final Confession of Faith will consist of positive truths.*

The announcement of a "New Theology" in these times in quite premature. As yet the mountains of the cosmic epoch have not appeared; and certain it is that no theology, which is founded on mere negations, can stand as the ultimate system. The manifesto of liberalism is in no wise constructive, but a mere framework of denials. It utters forth its "Apostles' Creed" on this wise:

I do not believe in God the Father Almighty, the Maker of heaven and earth; but in an impersonal, all-pervading Force.

I do not believe in Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son, our Lord; but in Jesus as an excellent man among men.

I do not believe that His crucifixion under Pontius Pilate had any connection with the redemption of the race; but that He died as a martyr, who exposing His breast to the shafts of the adversary met His fate heroically, like many other men.

I do not believe that He rose again from the dead, except in a metaphorical sense; or that He ascended into heaven and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, except, as all right-living men shall do.

I do not believe He shall come to judge the quick and the dead; but that the judgment is going on here and now.

I do not believe in the Holy Ghost as the Third Person of the ineffable Godhead; but as a mere impersonal affluence or effluence that rests for good upon all.

I do not believe in the forgiveness of sins by virtue of any atonement which was wrought in Christ; but that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap, unless, by default of justice, he may escape it.

It is absurd and preposterous to suppose that any such system of denials and contradictions is to constitute the faith of the Golden Age. On the contrary it merely marks the progress of the chaotic conflict of opinion out of which sooner or later will arise the clear outlines of formulated and universally accepted

truth; truth that shall be asserted not with ifs and peradventures, but with an unwavering Yea and Amen.

And, further, *the emphasis will be placed on essential truths;* that is, on such as have a practical bearing upon character and usefulness; all else will go.

We make a great deal, in these formative times, of the jot and tittle of things. We contend for theories. We cleave asunder on questions of mint, anise and cummin; and set ourselves in battle array by reason of a difference of opinion as to the proper breadth of our fringes and phylacteries. This is child's play: and the time is coming when we shall be ashamed of it. "When I was a child," says Paul, "I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things;" the reference being not now to the simplicity, but to the frivolity of childhood. The world's maturity has yet to come; and when it comes men and women will recall many of the occasions of controversy in our time as they remember their dolls and hobby-horses. They will have larger things to think of, larger questions to ponder, larger work to do; and the truths which touch upon the vast responsibilities of life and the stupendous issues of the hereafter will loom up like mountains against the blue sky.

Again, *the final system of doctrine will undoubtedly be Christo-centric.*

So much may be discerned in the clearing atmosphere of these troublous days. From the beginning of the Christian Era the great question has been, What think ye of Christ? And there is no consensus

of opinion as yet: the race is taking its time. Men talk about Jesus as they journey, part company at the Cross and meet no more. And still there is no sunburst. The magi came to Jerusalem asking, "Where is He that is born king of the Jews?" The answer came thirty years later when Pilate wrote the superscription, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."

The world's debate is centering more and more in Christ and His redemptive work. It was in the year 312 that Constantine said he saw, in the morning sky, the outline of a cross and above it the legend, "In this sign conquer." The weary centuries have passed; and though an ever-increasing army has been marching to ever-greater triumphs, the conflict still rages; and who shall foretell how many centuries must yet elapse before the nations join to sing:

> Behold the King of Glory pass;
> The cross hath won the field!

But the end is to be seen from the beginning. Christ shall not merely establish His throne on earth; but, dissipating all doubt and questioning as to His Messianic and mediatorial claims, He is destined to rule absolutely in the hearts and minds of all the children of men.

It may be confidently affirmed also, that *the Confession of Faith in the Golden Age will be Biblical.*

Though the heavens be rolled together as a scroll and the earth consumed with fervent heat, the word of the Lord endureth forever. The question as to the ultimate authority in spiritual things is still in

open controversy. The great body of believers assert the absolute trustworthiness of the Scriptures as the Word of God; but there are many who insist that the inner consciousness of the individual is the Court of Last Appeal. They place themselves on a level with the people of the time of the Judges, of whom it is written "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes." It cannot be supposed that such diversity of opinion as to the seat of ultimate authority will go on indefinitely. It must be settled before the break of the millennial day.

We are living in the midst of the debate; clouds of powder-smoke are hanging over us. Esdraelon rings with the tumultuous clash of steel. But to true believers there can be no misgiving as to the outcome; since Christ is to reign universally and the Scriptures are the only trustworthy source of information concerning him.

As the years pass it is certain that men will develop a more and more eager desire for truth; and in that noble quest there will be an ever-increasing sense of the need of some ultimate standard. Can it be found in the clashing deliverances of the church? Will the inner consciousness of a man, differing from all his fellows, furnish it? Nay, there is nowhere to look but to the oracles. The Word is now in question; its authenticity and reliability are being bandied to and fro in the thick of conflict; but it will abide, when the corrosive vapours lift, and from the high summit of divine authority will issue, as from Sinai, the determining voice, "Thus saith the Lord!"

And finally, *the truths of the Millennial Age will be dynamic truths.*

The play of controversy will give way to the endeavour of earnest life. The facts in evidence will be such as to enable a man to make the most of himself and do the utmost for his fellow men. One word, issuing from heaven, will roll around the world; the word which the militant Church has been so slow to hear, the word of the great commission, "Go!" For, however the great propaganda may have ceased, the Church of the latter days will not rest in listless inactivity. There will be new worlds to conquer; and truth will give wings to the feet of holy purpose, so that each of the Lord's servants shall run in the way of His commandments and rejoice to do His holy will.

Let it not be said that our forecast is mere guesswork. He who believes that the Spirit of God is "moving upon the face of the waters" in this formative period is bound to conclude that He will accomplish His purpose in the establishment of truth. And this is the ground of our confidence.

> O, blest is he to whom is given
> The instinct that can tell,
> That God is on the field when He
> Is most invisible!

Let us be of good courage, therefore, and borrow no trouble for the future. Buy thou the field of Anathoth, for Israel shall yet occupy it. Everything is going right. God rules amid the controversies of history, as He ruled in the primeval ages. The eternal years are His. He makes no haste. His pathway is along the cycles of Eternity. And by the same token "he that believeth shall not make haste."

Cosmos was not evolved out of chaos in a day. "The waters stood above the mountains; at thy rebuke they fled, at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away!" So shall be the final outcome of these jarring and disputatious times.

And meanwhile it behooves us to abide in faith. God will take care of His own. The Ark of the Covenant, drawn on a rude cart by oxen, shook and trembled; and when Uzzah, frightened for its safety, put forth his hand to steady it, lo, death smote him. God is equal to all emergencies. The future is secure. With eyes uplifted and hearts sustained by a serene confidence, let us keep step with the march of events.

"Be abreast of the times" they say. Nay, let us be abreast of the better times which are further on. The man of God lives in the present but his heart throbs to the reveillé of the future. As progressive thinkers, and as calm believers in manifest destiny, let us lend a hand to the high purposes of our Lord. The days of debate and confusion will presently come to an end; and out of the strife of opinion, as from chaos of old, the mountains will arise, and above them all these three, Sinai, Olivet and Calvary; and the nations will rest in their shadow and rejoice in God.

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